



Town of Warwick

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August 15, 2011

DCR – Landscape Designation Comments
251 Causeway St, Suite 600
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Gentlemen and Ladies,

The Mt. Grace State Forest and the Warwick State Forest make up 50% of the land area of the Town of Warwick. These forests are an important part of the fabric of our community and we think of ourselves as hosts to this land. Townspeople have actively been a part of the Forest Futures Visioning Process with Keith Ross and Ted Cady serving on the Committees. Various board members have attended the Comment Sessions and the Landscape Designation Workshops. At the Landscape Designation Workshops communities were encouraged to provide comment, and assured that the comments would be seriously considered. Warwick has acted on that invitation.

To ensure that the Warwick community spoke with one voice a joint meeting of the Selectboard, Conservation Commission, Town Forest Committee, Open Space Committee and Planning Board was scheduled for July 27, 2011. To prepare for the meeting we requested 24" by 36" maps of Warwick from the Franklin Regional Council of Government Planning Department, which were received on June 22. All maps showed roads, woods roads, contours and Draft DCR Landscape Designations.

Map 1 showed DCR forest harvests for the last 40 years, the Metacomet-Monadnock National Scenic Trail, electrical transmission lines and privately owned permanently protected land.

Map 2 showed Aquatic Core, BioMap2 Wetlands, Priority Natural Communities, Species of Conservation Concern and Forest Core.

Map 3 showed Prime Farmland Soils, BioMap2 Core Habitat, Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Priority Habitat.

A fourth 24" by 36" map was developed locally which provided regional context by printing the DCR Draft Landscape Designations from the DCR website for Warwick and the surrounding towns.

These maps were posted in the Warwick Library so they could be studied by the various board members. Some board members were confused by all the maps, so the Open Space Committee organized a meeting at the Library on July 26, 2011 to explain the maps in more detail.

At the July 27, 2011 All Boards meeting the digital projector system in the main hall of the town hall was used to project the above maps in .pdf format onto the large roll down screen on the stage, which resulted in about a 6 foot by 8 foot image that everyone could see. Given the abundance of information, it was necessary to consider one section at a time. After discussion of several different sections, we came to a remarkable, unanimous conclusion, which is an approximate reversal of the current Draft Landscape Designations.

I. The Town of Warwick recommends that all lands, except Parklands, North of a line made by Hastings Heights Rd, Athol Rd, Northfield Rd, White Rd and the extension of White Rd to the Northfield town line be Woodlands, and all land South of it, except Parklands, be designated Reserves.

There are quite a number of reasons for this recommendation:

1. The Barber Hill/Hockanum Hill and Gale Brook/Orcutt Brook corridors are important wildlife corridors known to the residents of the town and to wildlife professionals in the town; accordingly, these areas should be left undisturbed. Sections of Orcutt/Gale Brook are flanked by dramatic cliffs generated by the significant fault line that runs through Warwick. There are also areas of rich mesic woods associated with the slopes of the fault line in the stream corridor. This area is in the area Warwick proposes as Reserves.
2. Virtually all the DCR land South of the line separating the designated woodland and reserve areas is adjacent to endangered species priority habitat, and accordingly should be minimally disturbed. There is very little endangered species priority habitat north of the line.
3. Within a regional context it would join the Reserve areas of Wendell with those of Warwick, bringing the total closer to the 15,000 acre goal.
4. It would be unique, and we feel desirable, to have a Reserve area that includes lands on both sides of a major river (Millers River).
5. The North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership has noted that the best place for wildlife to cross the barrier of Route 2 safely in the Warwick – Orange – Wendell area is at the place where Route 2 crosses the Millers River at Wendell Depot. Here wildlife travelling North – South can travel under the long over-pass along the edge of the river, and can also ford the river, and continue on their journey. This significant wildlife

corridor and river crossing is at the midpoint of a major North – South corridor of protected lands comprised of the Warwick proposed DCR Reserve area in South Warwick, a section of Orange State Forest, the Draft Landscape Designated DCR Reserve Area in Wendell, and 2,500 acre Whetstone Wood Wildlife Sanctuary (2,000 acres in Wendell, and an additional, approximately, 500 acres in Orange and New Salem), as well as DCR Landscape Designated Woodlands in Erving and Northfield.

6. This would place Mt. Grace Land Conservation Trust's Arthur Iversen Forever Wild Conservation Area and a Mass. Audubon Conservation Restriction in the Reserve area, along with other permanently protected open lands (see attached map).
7. Most of the best and most accessible examples of good forest management are in the Northern part of town. These sites are adjacent to maintained town roads and several have parking close by, so it would be easy to lead forestry tours.
8. Much of the DCR land in the Southern half of the town is dominated by spectacular ledges that make it inaccessible for logging and also argue for its being left undisturbed.
9. This recommendation places the electrical transmission lines in Woodlands, which we consider more appropriate.
10. This recommendation places the Metacomet-Monadnock National Scenic Trail in Woodlands (and Parklands on Mt Grace) rather than Reserves. Locating the M & M Trail in Woodlands would facilitate the following potential improvements: creating new spur trails to connect the M & M Trail with other trails and parking areas at their trail head, re-routing the trail, and constructing primitive camping sites such as the one on Mt. Grace. Also, the M & M trail is unique for its views of the pastoral nature of the Connecticut River Valley, the Millers River Valley and more. Given this unique feature of the trail it might be desirable at some future time to open up scenic vistas, which can not be done in Reserves. Having the M&M trail in Woodlands also complies with the Reserve Criteria Goal of "a low density of officially designated trails." If one looks at the DCR Mt. Grace Trail Guide (see attached copy of a portion of the DCR Mt. Grace Trail Guide), by placing Mt. Grace in Woodlands the majority of the designated trail mileage is now in Woodlands.
11. Route 78 North is the most heavily traveled road in town. It is also used as a major cut across for heavy tractor trailer rigs wishing to avoid the scales, so land immediately adjacent to it is probably best zoned as Woodlands.
12. The area currently proposed by DCR as Reserves bounded by Robbins Road to the North, Old Winchester Road to the East, the Town Transfer Station to the South, and Route 78 to the West (across from the Picnic Area) includes houses along Old Winchester and Robbins Roads, in addition to heavy traffic along Route 78. This relatively small area has a long history of forest management, including a harvest within

the last 5 years, and is not well suited to Reserves. It is an excellent example of the high quality forest management done by decades of DCR management foresters. Although a small holding it has several very nice landings, and immediately accessible parking for forestry tours. We feel it is better suited to Woodlands.

13. The land in the Northeast corner of town was very heavily cut about 1974 and the logging roads were built to a high standard to make them suitable for a subdivision. This woods road network clearly shows on the attached maps. This area has not been cut by DCR but is a long way from pristine wilderness, about ready for an improvement cut and with the already established road network is probably better suited to Woodlands.

14. Putting Reserves up against the Northern edge of Massachusetts gives DCR no control over what happens on the other side in New Hampshire, so buffering Reserves would be impossible.

15. Mt. Grace Land Conservation Trust has a currently funded Legacy Project underway in North Warwick and has hopes for additional Legacy Projects in the same general area as federal funding permits. These projects are best served if the adjacent DCR land is zoned Woodlands, as the town proposes.

16. Warwick's proposed Woodlands and Reserves is compatible with DCR computer modeling for Reserves and Woodlands in Warwick.

II. The Town of Warwick supports the Parkland designations.

However, we note that all the buildings at the former prison camp and former DCR carpenter shop on Richmond Rd. have now been destroyed, although there is an asphalt pad there, we wonder somewhat about the reason for zoning it Parkland.

III. The Town of Warwick recommends that the long standing Adirondack Shelter on the M and M Trail on Mt. Grace at N 42 degrees 42.346 minutes, W 072 degrees 21.200 minutes be spot zoned Parkland.

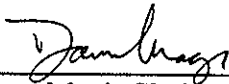
This is simply to confirm its existence and ensure that it can be rebuilt or modified in the future should that be necessary.

IV. The Town of Warwick brings to your attention that a number of private water supplies exist on state forest land or are influenced by them. The Town of Warwick buildings in the center of town, and the town's fire fighting cistern water supply are piped from a spring on the South slopes of Mt. Grace. Other spring and pipe systems in the same general area supply houses or provide back up water for those who have installed wells. In addition, two houses on the West side of Route 78 located about where the electrical transmission lines cross Route 78 each have a separate water source on state forest land, or close enough to be influenced. The DCR Selection Criteria and Management Guidelines Manual did not seem to address this issue. We assume other homes in Warwick also get their water from state land. In the past DCR has been very

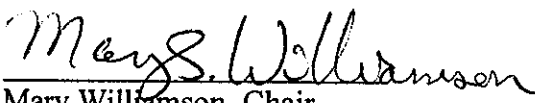
sensitive to this issue, so this is not a complaint. It is not clear to us whether this should be addressed now or as part of the forest management plan.


Thank you for the invitation to comment.

Yours truly,


Dawn Magi, Chair
Selectboard


Karro Frost, Chair
Conservation Commission

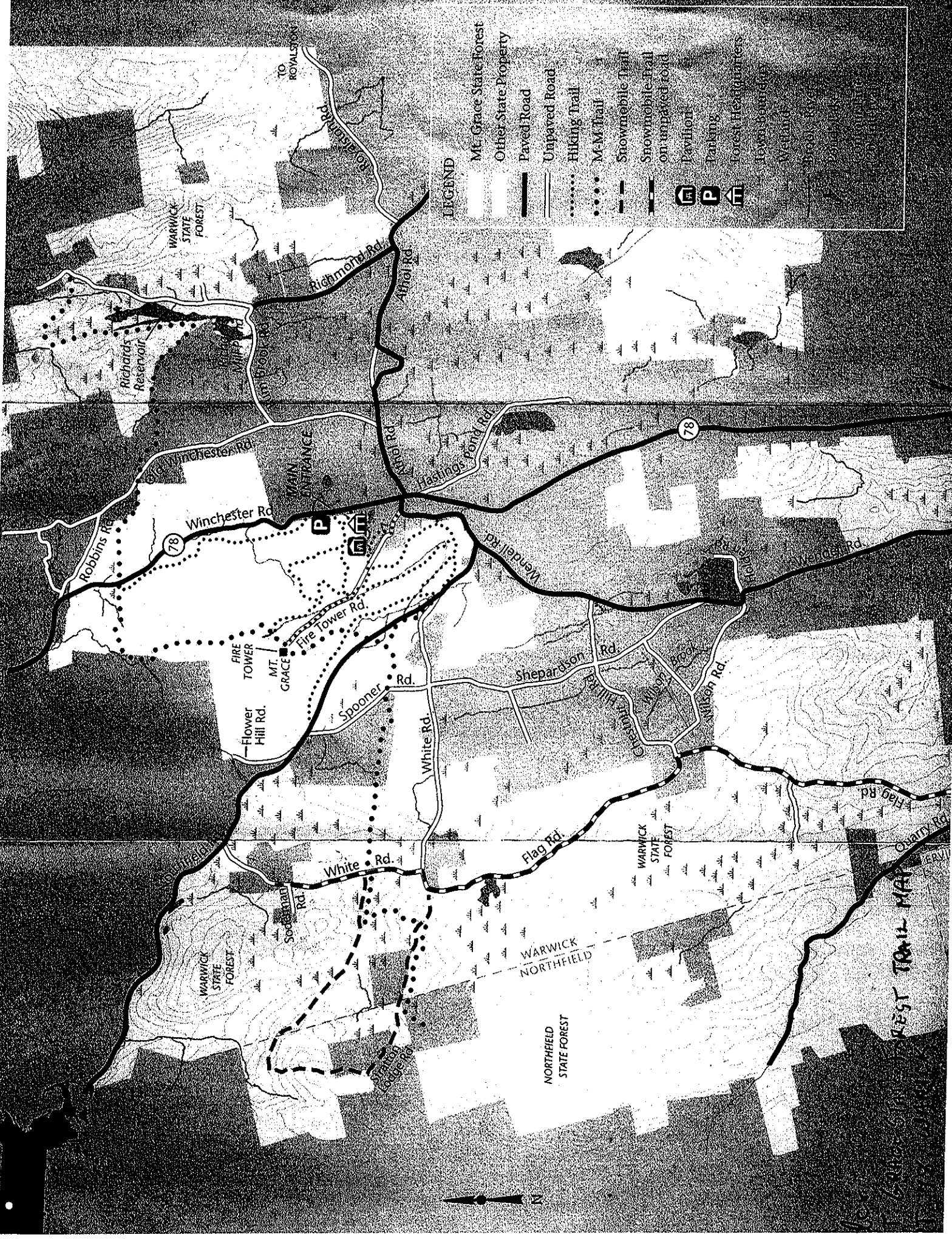

Mary Williamson, Chair
Open Space Committee


Ted Cady, Chair
Planning Board


Rod Whipple, Chair
Town Forest Committee

Attachments:

- Partial copy of dcr Mt. Grace State Forest Trail Map (stapled to letter)
- Map 1 – Draft Landscape Designations, Privately Owned Permanently Protected Open Space, DCR Timber Harvests for the Last 40 Years, Various M&M Trail Layouts, Electric Transmission Lines
- Map 2 – Aquatic Core, BioMap2 Wetlands, Priority Natural Communities, Species of Conservation Concern, Forest Core
- Map 3 – Prime Farmland Soils, BioMap2 Core Habitat, Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Priority Habitat



LEGEND

- Mt. Grace State Forest
- Other State Property
- Paved Road
- Unpaved Road
- Hiking Trail
- M-M Trail
- Snowmobile Trail
- Snowmobile Trail on unpaved road
- Pavilion
- Trucking
- Forest Headquarters
- Lower Boundary
- Wetland
- Bogus Lake
- Zone

