

REPORT TO THE WASHINGTON GROVE TOWN COUNCIL

from
the Forestry Committee
January 9, 1973

Forest Policy Report to the Mayor and Council

The Forest Committee, in making final recommendations on forest policy to the Mayor and Council, prefaces them with the hope that each member of the Council has recently reviewed the May 16, 1972 Report from the Forest Policy Committee to the Council. Our presentation tonight is based largely on research cited in that Report. We feel that consideration of one without the background of the other may raise questions already investigated, and for this reason, we urge that both reports be filed together for the interest and enlightenment of citizens in 1973 as well as those of a future year.

With the '72 Report fresh in mind, "The Committee proposes that the heart of the town's long range forest policy be a recognition that Washington Grove ... possesses an incomparable natural resource which becomes immensely more valuable to the town as this section of Montgomery County becomes more densely inhabited..."¹ We agree that the woods cannot be thought of in a single term, but that our forests should be considered for their multiple uses of esthetics, recreation, and as a protection against noise and invasion of privacy. These factors far outride the possible financial income from any timber cutting plan.

Therefore, we recommend:

- I. That the town protect and maintain the integrity of its forest reserve, undiminished in acreage, as an indispensable element in preserving the idyllic character of the community.²
- II. That the town charge the Forestry Committee with the management of the town forests in accord with this policy which will protect the woods as we know them, and which will increase their effectiveness as recreational, esthetic, educational, and protective areas of our town.
 - A. Priority Considerations for the Committee:
 1. Protection of the Woods
 - a. to consider the dedication of East and West Woods as Parkland for the purpose of preventing their demise without long and care consideration by all citizens of the Grove.
 - b. demarkatjon of woods boundary through fencing and/or signs or other means.
 - c. development and execution of a barrier plan which will allow controlled access to the woods, but which will make trails unsuitable for motor vehicles such as cycles.
 - d. identification and supervision of drainage areas in order to prevent woods damage, to correct existing erosion like the TownCrest run-off, and to control drainage in areas in accord with management policy.

2. Protection of the town through a specific program of buffer plantings against the myriad intrusions of noise, traffic, people, and visually offending sights.
- B. Other Considerations for the Committee:
1. Enhancement of the recreational aspects of the woods
 - a. development of a nature program ranging from improved woods trails “natural” in character, to identification walks conducted by Audubon members or similar experts.
 - b. posting woods as bird/wildlife sanctuaries and increasing forest diversity through varied plantings.
 2. Development of a good neighbor policy aimed at people living on the woods borders as well as town citizens in hopes that all will want to enjoy our woods by protecting them through trash control, proper access, and similar education.
- C. The Council should be kept informed of management progress; therefore we recommend that the Council adopt a review or preview system and that such information be passed on to all citizens.
- D. We recommend that the Forestry Committee include a member of the Planning Commission along with the Councilman in charge of Forests for reasons of liaison and efficiency.
- III. That the Council and Planning Commission strive to preserve all existing green space whether public or private within town borders. These areas add to the “natural” feel of the Grove, and while the town has control over public areas only, we suggest that it might wisely keep an eye on private green spaces. As these come up for sale, the town might try to maintain them through purchase or other means that would be available.

Overriding all the Committee’s recommendations has been the element of time.

“We should remember hat the time duration involved with wild areas is very long in comparison with the usual events of our lives. A whole generation, or perhaps two or three generations, can be served by existing wild area conditions with only protection from wild fire, commercial use, and overuse by people. There is always great uncertainty about future attitudes of people long before a wild area can in any way be ‘spoiled’ by ecological changes. There is plenty of time to observe, formulate and change management plans, and even change objectives. At best we plan no further ahead than the world of our children and grandchildren. But establishing (and maintaining) wild areas will at least give them a choice. We will not have pre-empted their options.”³

If the Mayor and Council can take our recommendations and put them to use in ways which will give the next generation or two of Grovers these same forests to make policy for, Washington Grove will still be, perhaps, a good place to live.

January 9, 1973

Ann Briggs, Lee Fisher, Dick Haskett, Kay Jones, Larry Miller, John Pentecost, Bob Smith

^{1, 2.} - Committee Report, 1972

^{3.} - Minckler, Leon S., “Wilderness East?--YES”, American Forests, December, 1972, p. 42