

## **WOODS COMMITTEE VISION & MISSION**

### **Woods Committee Vision**

Washington Grove's Forest Preserve is a diverse, multi-storied, self-sustaining ecology of native trees, shrubs and plants. Its hallmarks are a full canopy, a succession of native trees and a wide variety of native plants at every level of the forest. As a vibrant ecosystem it supports native plant species and habitat for native animal communities, continuously enhances the soil, and resists the invasion of non-native species.

### **Woods Committee Mission**

The Woods Committee is charged with following the Forestry Stewardship Plan which was approved and adopted by the Town of Washington Grove in December 2015. This plan takes an integrated approach to forest health restoration and management of the town's Forest Preserve which encompasses both the East and West Woods. The plan is intended to prevent further degradation of the Forest Preserve, to offer a roadmap for restoring and preserving it as a healthy, self-sustaining forest ecosystem, and to help ensure that its benefits are available to future generations.

Actions supporting the Mission include:

- minimize over-browsing by deer
- remove and control the spread of non-native invasive plants
- plant native trees to fill holes in the canopy and reforest open areas
- proactively protect native trees at all stages of growth to rebuild the natural succession
- re-establish a healthy mid- and understory through regrowth and replanting
- protect existing tree canopy, reforested areas, sensitive plant and animal habitats and other high-priority areas through education, signage and, if necessary, physical barriers
- protect sensitive areas—federal and state-designated wetlands, streams and their buffers, 100-year flood plains, habitats of threatened and endangered species, and steep slopes—from the adverse effects of development and over-use
- preserve the natural quiet and unique forest auditory experience which includes the presence of birdsong, movement in leaf litter, wind through trees and other woodland sounds as well as the absence of man-made noise pollution from motors and active recreation

### **Benefits of a Healthy Town Forest Preserve**

- Improves air quality and moderates temperature
- Provides protected habitat for plants and wildlife in a region of diminishing habitat. Protection includes quiet for breeding and nesting, walkways that avoid nesting and breeding sites, and a healthy mid-story which many birds require.
- Prevents erosion and water quality degradation of the headwaters of 3 significant waterways.
- As a place of quiet, beauty, inspiration and sanctuary, it enhances the quality of life for residents and visitors and offers opportunities for passive recreation, exploration and discovery throughout the year
- It is an important part of the town's identity (A Town within a Forest), a contributing factor to the Washington Grove experience, and a setting that, in all likelihood, adds to the value of homes in town
- Provides natural buffer from surrounding development.

## Woods Preservation Accomplishments to Date

2015

- TC approved Forestry Stewardship Plan (Bill Bond report) describing the health status of East and West Woods and extent of impact by non-native invasive plants
- WC formulated the WG integrated forest restoration plan for invasive plant control, deer population control, and reforestation with the goal of a self-sustaining healthy woods ecosystem containing a variety of native hardwood trees, plants, and wildlife; natural tree succession; and a full canopy with diverse understory. (See diagrams below)
- WC volunteer activities included trail maintenance, trash removal, invasive plant mechanical removal, and native tree planting.

2016

- Town budget (FY2017) approved for non-native invasive plant control
- WC assessed and mapped the impact of invasive plant in East Woods
- WC prepared RFP for distribution to potential contractors
- WC conducted on-site visits with potential contractors discussing mechanical and chemical methods
- TC reviewed contractor bids and invited potential contractor to TC meeting to answer questions
- WC volunteer activities included trail maintenance, trash removal, invasive plant mechanical removal, and native tree planting.

2017

- Invasive Plant Control, Inc. (IPC) representatives attended TC meeting to explain their procedures
- TC unanimously approved IPC contract and scheduled an informational meeting for town residents
- WC hosted informational meeting with IPC representatives for town residents in February 2017
- IPC initiated first mechanical and chemical treatments on wisteria and Japanese honeysuckle in spring. Later treatments targeted stilt grass, mile-a-minute, and English ivy in summer and fall.
- WC hosted second Informational meeting on ‘Saving the Woods’ for town residents in April 2017 presenting an overview of integrated forest restoration plan, invasive plant impacts and control methods, and deer population control options.
- Town budget (FY2018) was approved to continue IPC contract
- WC developed “Criteria for Decision-making” guide for objective long-range planning
- WC co-sponsors ‘Hometown Habitat’ film with Recreation Committee to inform town residents on gardening with native plants.
- WC volunteer activities included trail maintenance, trash removal, invasive plant mechanical removal, and native tree planting

2018

- WC will assess first year progress on invasive plant control in East Woods
- Continue FY2018 IPC contract
- WC volunteer activities included trail maintenance, trash removal, invasive plant mechanical removal, and native tree planting.

