

A REPORT TO THE WASHINGTON GROVE TOWN COUNCIL
FROM
A SPECIAL FOREST POLICY COMMITTEE
MAY 16, 1972

I

Summary and Recommendations

On Jan. 11, 1972, the Town Council heard a proposal for harvesting some 400 of the largest trees in the Lake Woods. A number of town residents protested the proposal at that meeting. Consequently, the Council created a special committee to conduct a comprehensive study of the town's forest resources and to report by June 1, 1972, with recommendations for a long range forest policy for Washington Grove.

The committee members appointed by the Council – Ann Briggs, Dick Haskett, Kay Jones, Larry Miller, Lee Fisher, John Pentecost and Bob Smith – determined to evaluate all options fully. Accordingly, the committee met with or consulted private, state and federal forestry officials in order to secure the best advice from a cross-section of competent specialists, and to distill from their advice the information deemed most pertinent and applicable to the unique forests of Washington Grove. Most of the consultants toured the town's forests with committee members. In no instance were the consultants given a framework that might limit their advice, for the committee formulated no preconceptions prior to giving each consultant a hearing. For example, Charles Keeley, the district forester for the state of Maryland, who was consulted several times, kept asking, "What have you decided to do?" Each time he was told, "We don't know yet." In a word, the committee approached the study with an open mind to a wide range of ideas.

The committee found this to be a complex subject, so much so that it was unable to resolve all of the questions raised by its study within the time frame imposed by the Council. The issue is not simply to cut or not to cut. Rather, it is whether the town should adopt a forest management plan or let Nature manage the forests for us with minimal interference from Man.

In appraising our forest resource, the committee reviewed plans for the various residential and commercial developments which are closing in from all sides in order to sharpen the perspective from which the town must determine its forest policy. The words of the late Irving L. McCathran, former mayor and poet laureate, become more appropriate than ever in this context: "It is a town within a forest, an oasis of tranquility and a rustic jewel in the diadem of the great Free State of Maryland."

The committee proposes that the heart of the town's long range forest policy be a recognition that Washington Grove, the only town in the state with its own forest, possesses an incomparable natural resource which becomes immensely more valuable to the town as this section of Montgomery County becomes more densely inhabited, as the barns and stables give way to townhouses and apartment clusters, as pastures and cornfields are paved and subdivided.

Therefore, we unanimously recommend that:

1. 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. The town reject any proposals for timber cutting for at least a year until the full implications of various timber management plans can be fully explored.

3. The Council direct that all data acquired by this inquiry be submitted to the standing Forestry Committee for further investigation and that the Forestry Committee be directed to prepare a final forest policy report to the Council for submission no later than June 1, 1973.
4. The Forestry Committee be authorized to form the Washington Grove Ecology Corps within such limits as may be prescribed by the Town Council from year to year.

The remainder of this report presents in greater detail the options reviewed by the committee and an evaluation of their economic, ecological and esthetic effects, as well as the committee's conclusions from which these recommendations have emerged. Much supporting data acquired during this study will be retained on file.

The committee wishes to express its deep gratitude to the following professionals who gave generously of their time during the past three months at no expense to the town:

Henry W. DeBruin of the U.S. Forest Service. In more than 20 years with the Forest Service, Mr. DeBruin has served as a ranger, a forest supervisor and assistant regional forester. He currently serves as head of the agency's fire control program.

Tony Skufca of the U.S. Forest Service. He, too, served as a forest ranger and forest supervisor before being promoted to the office of the chief of the Forest Service where he heads a division of recreation for the national forest system.

Charles A. Keeley, the district forester from Laurel employed by the state of Maryland which has jurisdiction over our area. Mr. Keeley and his predecessors have periodically advised officials of the town within the framework of their duty to render professional advice to private owners of small woodlots who wish to harvest trees for commercial gain.

Duane Lyon, Landscape Architect, U.S. Forest Service.

James Deppa, private forestry consultant.

Wayne Sieck, ornithologist.

Lopes, Maryland State Department of Natural Resources.

II Historical Perspective

The 200-acre tract which was to become Washington Grove was purchased in 1872 by the Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association for its natural assets -- elevation, springs and an abundance of woods. The trees included a grove of ancient white oaks and a scattering of elm, hickory, maple and pines, we are told by Irving L. McCathran. Thus from the outset a century ago, the trees of Washington Grove were recognized as a major asset in their living state, not as potential logs to be sold for commercial gain. This is understandable because the town's roots are entirely spiritual rather than commercial.

By the turn of the century, when the Grove became part of the Chautauqua Circuit, receiving "its first secular injection," as McCathran put it, the town entered its next phase, that of the summer resort, "a favored spot for city dwellers to escape the well-known and dreaded heat of the Washington summers." Again, it was the town's natural endowment, notably the living trees, which made the difference.

In 1937 when the town was incorporated, the Grove entered its next phase, that of a country village inhabited gradually by more and more year-around tax-paying townsmen. A few years later, during World War II, the town first gave thought to harvesting trees. Mayor McCathran in September, 1944, wrote to the district forester to inquire about the feasibility of logging the town's forests "to help the war effort." The district forester examined the town's forests and prepared reports listing all of the merchantable trees by species and size in both the east woods and the west woods, one in 1945 and the other in 1946. This survey revealed a multitude of species, including white oaks, black oaks, red oaks, pines, hickory and maples of different variety. The largest trees were as much as 30 inches DBH (diameter breast height).

By this time the war had ended -- but the prospect of financial gain lingered. The district forester had identified over 1400 trees which he said could be cut and sold, without clear-cutting the entire forest reserve. All trees 10 inches and more in diameter were marked for the logger, and the town entered into a contract with Mizell Lumber Co. of Kensington for their sale and removal. Mizell cut 530 trees in the east woods and 881 trees in the lake woods. The town was paid about \$3,000 by the lumber company, or about \$2.10 for each of its most mature trees.

In 1956 the district forester received another inquiry from the town, this time from Alfred Christie III, about the feasibility of making another timber cut. Charles Keeley, then the assistant district forester, examined the woods and concluded: "There is not a sufficient stand of timber for a timber sale at the present time. Mr. Keeley found that the average size of the trees in both woods was about 10 inches DBH. "Since it was cut over a few years ago there is practically no saw timber volume at the present time," Keeley reported.

In 1971 the district forester received another inquiry from Mr. Christie, then serving as town mayor, about the feasibility of another timber sale. This time Mr. Keeley advised that there was sufficient saw timber volume in the lake woods to make a timber sale. Mr. Christie thereupon engaged a private forestry consultant to identify and mark most of the largest trees in the lake woods, excluding all trees in the immediate vicinity of the lake. An invitation for bids from loggers followed before the question of cutting was put before the town council. In January, 1972, after town residents noticed blue markings on several hundred trees, a group of residents determined to protest any immediate timber sale. At the next town council meeting the controversy was discussed at length by town residents who opposed cutting, by town councilmen

who were divided on the issue, and by the mayor who recommended cutting as a source of revenue for the town and for the good of the forest. At length, on a motion by Councilman Doughty, the town council decided to form this special committee and to shelve the mayor's logging proposal. As a consequence, Mr. Christie resigned as mayor and was succeeded by Mr. Doughty.

Of those appointed to the committee, Mr. Haskett has been a town resident the longest, 23 years, and a member of the Planning Commission, Forestry Committee, and Town Council. His commentary on changes during his residency offer newcomers a sharper perspective on the rapidly changing total environment of the Gaithersburg area which the committee believes must be considered in developing a town forest policy:

"Twenty-three years ago, coming home to Washington Grove literally meant passing through broad woodlands and open fields. All three roads from route 355 made quiet passage to the Grove. Oakmont Avenue ran past barns, three or four houses, then a small cluster of homes by the railroad crossing. Eastward from Ridge Road farm land reached to heavy woods perhaps a quarter of a mile away. Central Avenue had only a scattering of houses, most surrounded by large acreage, with rolling fields beyond. Trees and a few small houses bordered Deer Park Drive, and west of it was a huge, green tangle of brushy wood covered hills. Beside the road a small stream began its meandering course to the Seneca. The road from Gaithersburg was bounded by the scruffy B&O trackside and open farmland which sloped down to the west Grove woods (where the old lake bed lay empty, awaiting the touch of Marj Christie and a new Lake Committee). From the north, the Laytonsville Road brought a few houses to the edge of town but beyond them were pastures and fields. And no matter what the direction of the homecoming, the Grove itself offered tree lined paths, broad parks, close-set woods, and quiet ways.

"Today, almost a quarter century later, the way home leads past housing developments, warehouses, factories. And even where fields still stand open; the clear air really is an illusion. The land is officially doomed to development.

"Along Oakmont the big Sears building obscures the barns; and closer still to the Grove, factory and warehouse warrens close in on both sides of the road. East of Ridge Road the open farmland is scarred by a logging trail; the distant wood is under attack and the land at hand is condemned to carry a multitude of new houses within the very near future. East of Central Avenue the rising open ground has long been covered by all the little boxes on Walnut Hill. West of Deer Park Drive the bulldozer has beaten down trees and rounded off inconvenient hills so they could be covered with scores of houses. The little stream has disappeared, driven underground by the developers.

"From Gaithersburg to the Grove, the farm still gives a breathing space; but the breath must be short, for the builders plat for this land is complete, and row upon row of houses are coming, to fill the empty acres along the borders of our lake woods. In the curve of the pike, farm machinery stands on ground zoned commercial awaiting the inevitable shopping center. North of town the approach from Laytonsville has been conquered by housing development. East and west, apartment houses wall in the town's woods.

"But today, just as twenty three years ago, no matter what the approach to town, in Washington Grove itself are tree lined paths, broad parks, close set woods, even

relatively quiet ways. After a quarter of a century, and in spite of all that others have done around us, the Grove itself remains the Grove.

“With one big difference. Since so much of the world around us has suffered decay, those qualities which once made our town merely a very good place to live now make the Grove very nearly unique. And we who live here enjoy our special felicity because of the great good grace of an honor roll of mayors -- Leroy McCathran, Joe Sylvester, George Pughe, Al Christie -- and other good citizens who have worked constantly for the present and the future of Washington Grove.

“All of us who carry on in the future must dedicate ourselves to a forest policy that will preserve the best of Washington Grove.”

III Our Forest Resource Today

The east woods and the lake woods are distinctly different in character and potential.

The east woods is 45 acres in size. The trees are noticeably shorter than those in the lake woods. The soil is of poorer quality and less well drained by reason of its low lying location and the number of springs. The dominant species is oak but the growth rate is slow because of these natural handicaps. There is no merchantable timber in this woods today. Greenbrier abounds in these woods because it thrives in sunlight that is admitted by the absence of large trees through much of this area. This is beneficial to birds and wildlife but an obstacle in some areas to people who wish to explore the woods beyond its wide fire trails.

The lake woods, 47 acres on the west side of highway 124, consists of a faster growing stand of trees due to its favorable soil conditions. Since the massive harvest of the later 1940s, the dominant specie in the lake woods has been the tulip poplar. It grows twice as fast as oaks. Virtually all of the trees marked as merchantable in 1973 were tulip poplars. There are lesser numbers of oaks, hickory, maples, black gum and dogwood. There are fewer birds and less wildlife in this woods.

IV Options

The committee set out to develop a policy for this resource on the assumption that there are two fundamentally conflicting alternatives:

- A. Preservation of both woods in a natural state in perpetuity.
- B. Alteration of the natural resource in accord with a specially adapted forest management plan which would involve timber cutting.

The committee quickly discovered that to cut or not to cut is really not the issue. The question, instead, is to decide how to manage the forests.

The distinction between simply cutting and managing the forest can be illustrated by the example of the recently proposed timber sale. The sale of 400 of the largest trees in the lake woods would be what professional foresters call “high grading” – that is, cutting virtually all of the trees of the highest commercial value throughout the woods, leaving only the smaller trees until they are ready for the next cut, perhaps in another 25 to 30 years. That is one of several timber management options, each of which involves different cutting methods. Each also has different consequences. The committee sought professional advice and evaluated 10 options:

1. Maintain the woods as they have evolved since the last timber cut 25 years ago for such purposes as Nature and town residents wish to use them within the limits of protecting living trees and plants.
2. Foster the, development of more flora in the lake woods and more fauna in the east woods and more nature trails in both, the better to enjoy them as nature centers with both recreational and educational value.
3. Transfer of the woods to Montgomery County or the state for preservation as parkland on the assumption that it would be available primarily to all town residents (as well as non-residents) and would be maintained at no expense to the town.
4. Development of active outdoor recreation facilities within the forests under a program that might be eligible for federal or state financial aid.

These first four options preclude commercial timber cutting. The next six options require commercial cutting.

5. High grading - cut and removal of most of the most valuable trees periodically as they mature into merchantable -timber.
6. A large clear cut of some 30 acres of the lake woods, leaving no trees in this area but encouraging the growth of seedlings for a new crop of the most productive and rapidly maturing species to the exclusion of other species.
7. Small clear cuts leaving no trees in selected areas approximately 5 acres in size, followed by new growth of species selected for their commercial value as in a large clear cut.
8. Selective cutting. This is a variation on high grading which could preserve designated mature trees but generally is designed to harvest the most mature and merchantable timber as it reaches commercial dimensions.
9. Sanitation cutting. This is a much more restrictive form of logging, primarily removal of secondary and non-marketable growth so as to permit the more mature trees to flourish.

Finally, the committee considered another option suggested by one consultant which could be employed in combination with any of the above options:

10. Sale of lots for residential development along the outer boundaries of the woods as a means of providing high income for the town and developing a living barrier, as it were, of town residents with a more protective attitude toward the woods than outsiders living on the periphery in apartments, townhouses and dwellings already built or to be constructed in the near future.

V Evaluation of Options

Of these 10 options, the committee eliminated four of them for these reasons:

1. Transfer of the woods to the state or county. The greatest risk in this proposal would be loss of control. The forests might be eliminated completely in future years in accord with pressures on state or county officials which the town could not offset. This risk is unacceptable.

2. Sale of residential lots. While this would provide the source of highest income for a limited period, it would also substantially reduce the size of the forest buffer between the town and the ring of housing developments closing in from all sides. Short of a monumental financial disaster facing the town, this option would appear in the long run to be unwise for it would erode the town's natural fortress against alien private encroachments.

3. Development of active recreation with federal or state financial aid. Any program of this nature would require substantial investment by the town, at least 25 per cent of the cost of construction of recreation facilities, plus 100 per cent of the cost of maintenance every year thereafter. Such a program would also require the town to post the woods as being open to everyone, not just residents of the town. This is unacceptable because it would require town investment in facilities for non-residents.

4. A large clear cut. This would virtually eliminate the lake woods beyond the fringe of trees circling the lake for a long period, 15 years at least, during which seedlings developed into a stand of second growth trees. Of all of the options, this would probably be the most destructive of the resource and the most in conflict with the basic assumption that the forest is indispensable to maintaining the idyllic charm of Washington Grove.

Of the six remaining options, two involve total preservation and four involve cutting in some form. In evaluating the four cutting options, the committee sought careful estimates from its professional consultants as to the income potential from each option. The results were as follows:

High-grading -- net income today \$10,000 to \$12,000; income from another cut in 25 to 30 years, \$8,000 to \$10,000; net income from a third cut some 60 years from today, \$6,000 to \$8,000; or a total net income over the 60-year period of \$30,000.

Consultants from the U.S. Forest Service pointed out that if the town were to adopt a timber cutting option, it would be imprudent to adopt the high-grading option and immediately cut the trees already marked in the lake woods. They pointed out that these tulip poplars are just entering into their period of fastest growth, that if they were allowed to stand for another 10 years or more their value would be increased far greater than a stand of younger poplars allowed to grow over the same period. Consequently, the committee unanimously agreed to recommend against an immediate cutting.

Selective cut -- net income over 60 years would be an estimated \$30,000 to \$36,000, none of it immediately but only as trees reached their point of optimum growth and commercial value, probably 12 to 24 years from now.

Small clear cuts -- each clear cut would cover up to five acres and be spaced at 12 to 15 year intervals. The first cut, immediately, would provide a net return of \$1,000 to \$2,000. Each cut thereafter would provide progressively more income until the 6th cut would return \$8,000 to \$9,000, for a total of about \$36,000. During the second 60-year cycle, potential income from this plan would rise substantially. If the entire lake woods were transformed by this approach into a carefully managed tree farming operation, one consultant estimated that it could bring as

much as \$70,000 to \$80,000 between the years 2030 and 2090 or double the projected income between now and the year 2030.

Sanitation cuts -- an immediate sanitation cut, harvesting secondary or medium sized trees that compete with the larger trees, plus culls and stunted trees, would bring from \$3,000 to \$4,000. This could be repeated perhaps every 25 to 30 years, but with substantially less income potential because the mature trees would dominate the forest and retard young growth.

Sanitation cuts could also be employed in combination with small clear cuts or with selective cutting, thereby increasing the total net income from either of those two options to a maximum of \$40,000 over the 60-year period.

In short, if the town opts for the highest income plan of timber management, it must choose between one of these two combinations, either of which would return approximately the same revenue during the next 60 years.

Just how much revenue the town might realize from any cutting program would depend on the answer to another policy question -- what happens after the loggers depart? Commercial loggers take only a portion of the tree, usually the main trunk section, leaving the array of upper limbs and tops in the woods. If this material is left as the loggers amputate it from the trunk, it takes a number of years for it to rot and return to the soil. The deterioration process can be accelerated by lopping the branches into shorter sections, lying on or closer to the ground, but that is time consuming and expensive. Or this material can be removed from the woods at even greater, indeed, prohibitive expense. For some years after the harvest, then, the character of the forest is quite different than it was before the harvest. Not only are there fewer trees but there is a new thicket of natural debris. Wildlife love this change but some individuals find it esthetically offensive.

Mr. Keeley said it is always a mistake to ask loggers to clean up debris "because they don't know how to clean up a woods." Hence the town would be faced with hiring others to clean up the debris or leaving it to rot in the natural course of events.

The income figures associated with the above management plans are based on lopping the debris down to a relatively low level and leaving it in place in the woods. If that were the policy, the maximum income the town could achieve from logging would be \$40,000 over the next 60 years, which averages out to \$667 per year. Most members of the committee believe that this modest return, which is equivalent to only 1.6 per cent of the current annual town budget, is so insignificant as to make all timber cutting options unjustifiable when based simply on financial considerations.

The committee recognizes, however, that revenue is not the sole consideration in timber management planning. A small clear cut, for example, could temporarily provide variety in the form of an open meadow in the woods, creating a favorable environment for vegetation that demands sunlight and for wildlife that thrives on the edges of the woods. Some consultants argued persuasively for such a management plan shaped to fit the objectives of the town and the limitations of our forests.

Some committee members are dubious of other consequences of timber cutting, primarily the esthetic effects. An objective of timber management is to achieve maximum timber growth and productivity over the long run. This is achieved by encouraging growth of the species best adapted to the forest (in the lake woods the fast-growing tulip poplar) and discouraging growth of other species. In time this would change the character of the woods. Precisely how the woods would be altered would depend on details of the management plan. There appears to be more opportunity for variety with small clear-cuts than with high-grading or selective logging plans.

Each clear-cut of up to five acres could be shaped differently; each cut would be spaced twelve years apart, so that a succession of clear-cuts would result in trees of different sizes in the woods as a whole. In each cut-over area, however, the woods walker would experience sameness at any given point, say, 5-year-old poplars here, 17-year-old poplars farther down the trail, and 30-year-olds elsewhere. Eventually there would be little or no mingling of different sizes or species if the forest is managed as a tree farm for maximum commercial gain.

On the other hand, small clear-cuts might allow new plants and shrubs to be introduced in sunlit areas, thus off-setting the dominant sameness of a woods devoted to single crop tree farming.

High-grading or selective logging would allow mingling of different sizes ranging from seedlings to medium diameter trees but elimination of most large trees as they become merchantable and elimination of less productive species that interfere with the main crop specie.

Another consideration common to all timber harvesting plans is the impact of removing felled timber from the woods. Most loggers use caterpillar-type machinery to drag tree trunks out of the woods to be loaded onto trucks for transport to the sawmill. This procedure, as committee members observed in a private woods nearby that was recently logged (high-graded), can be highly disruptive and destructive of the forest floor. One logger advised the committee that he has a rubber-tired front-end loader which presumably would do less damage, but the committee has not inspected a woods in which it has been used. Another possibility is use of horses or mules if any are left in this area.

If a timber cutting plan were undertaken, the committee believes that a professional forestry consultant should be hired to prepare such a plan and to supervise its implementation. The estimated cost would be from \$200 to \$500 for the initial planning and \$50 annually thereafter for the consultant, plus the labor costs of implementing management decisions such as thinning, planting, etc.

The committee was unable to complete its investigation of the full implications of various management options due to time limitations. Committee members wanted, for example, to make on-site visits to forests in which such plans are operative before drawing final conclusions. Therefore, the committee recommends that these timber management options neither be adopted nor eliminated until this inquiry has been completed with the view to determining whether any have net positive value for our forest resource. Further, it recommends that this work be concluded by the regular Forestry Committee during the coming year with full assistance from members of this special committee.

In evaluating the two options involving preservation, the committee recognized that the simplest, easiest option of all is to maintain the status quo by prohibiting timber cutting and allowing Nature to "manage" the forests as is customary in both state and national parks. That is essentially the approach taken during the past 25 years since the massive timber harvest of the late 1940s, but only because there was no saw timber left to cut until very recently. The question today is whether this is a viable approach for the next 25 or 50 years or, indeed, in perpetuity.

The committee asked its consultants whether the forests would survive or die out or change in any significant way if left to evolve naturally. All of the professional foresters agreed that the woods would survive and would be in no danger of dying certainly for the next half century at a minimum. Individual trees would die upon reaching the end of their natural life span, to be replaced by younger trees. Some species, however, might die out to be succeeded by other species. (Prior to the 1940s harvest the lake woods was dominated by oaks; but the specie that subsequently became dominant was the tulip poplar.)

Mr. DeBruin took borings of the largest poplars and determined that the age of the oldest trees in the lake woods is 45 to 50 years. In short, if left undisturbed for 50 years the lake woods will remain largely a poplar grove whose oldest trees will reach maturity and maximum size around the year 2020.

The east woods if undisturbed would remain an oak grove. The trees would mature more slowly than in the lake woods for two reasons: oaks grow more slowly than poplars, and poor soil and drainage further inhibit growth in the east woods. Nonetheless, this oak grove will survive indefinitely. Its oldest trees are shorter and thinner than those in the lake woods today, but they will have a longer life span.

The second of the preservation options is an extension of the first. In addition to prohibiting timber cutting, it would involve positive improvements to enhance the nature center aspects of either woods. Due to their different characteristics, the east woods is ideal for development as a bird sanctuary and the lake woods is preferable for encouraging a variety of flora. Our ornithologist consultant suggested that bird feeding and breeding could be improved in the east woods. A pond might also be constructed, fed by the stream that meanders through this woods. Motor bikes or cycles should be banned in the woods because the noise frightens birds away from the area. Bird houses or other nesting areas might be added, as well as observation posts or blinds for bird watching and photography. Guided nature walks could be conducted over new trails. Even without taking special measures to attract birds, our consultant reports that 39 bird species have been sighted in Washington Grove. At least a dozen wildlife species as well as reptiles have also been observed. The encroachment of residential development in fields adjacent to the town is expected to reduce the wildlife population in the future.

The committee is unanimous in endorsing these options in the event that all timber management plans are rejected.

Finally, the committee members concluded that however the forests are managed in years to come, they could be improved in a variety of ways, starting with removal of all accumulated trash. This work is too time consuming to be performed within the regular town maintenance budget, too costly to be performed by outside business enterprises, and too extensive to be completed by volunteer labor from the town. The committee believes that a practical approach would be for the town to hire a small number of young people during school vacation. There is good precedent for this approach. In 1971 the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service began a summer program called the Youth Conservation Corps for teenagers to work in forest camps at modest pay, performing relatively simple tasks such as clearing streams, building trails and camp facilities.

Our town has a number of young people, boys and girls, whose strong interest in ecology would make them fit candidates for a program of this nature dedicated to making regular improvements in our forest preserves. Therefore, the committee urges that a Washington Grove Ecology Corps be created and placed under the direction of the standing Forestry Committee within such budgetary limits as the town council prescribes.

One problem the committee is concerned with involves maintaining the integrity and esthetic quality of the outer edges of the forests where they form a border along new housing developments. The committee is convinced that it is not now feasible to erect fences to keep outsiders from entering the woods. Barriers made of briars or other thorny plantings have been suggested as an alternative to fences. Several consultants advised posting "No Trespassing"

signs along the edge, chiefly to guard against liability in case of accidents to persons not authorized to be in the woods. Several committee members favored an attempt to educate residents of the new housing developments as to the merit of helping to preserve the forests for all to enjoy. The Ecology Corps might be mobilized in such an effort. In any event, this will likely be a continuing problem which only the standing Forestry Committee can attempt to resolve as conditions arise from the rapid changes along the outer borders of the woods.

The committee is also alarmed about the condition of a number of the main pathways through the woods which have been seriously rutted by the town tractor. It is apparent that the tractor has been driven through the woods when the trails were too soft to support the weight of this vehicle without damaging the terrain. Repair of the trails can be undertaken by the Ecology Corps but the committee feels strongly that adequate measures must be taken in the future to prevent repetition of this destructive action. The committee hopes that the final report issued by the Forestry Committee will recommend more strict controls over the use of vehicles in the forests. And it proposes that the town tractor be equipped with large balloon tires designed to protect the terrain, such as those used by tractors operated on Montgomery County's public golf courses.

In conclusion, we who have been entrusted with this assignment have given it many hours, largely in gratitude for the present opportunity we have as residents of Washington Grove and in hope for its future. We have tried to make recommendations for a policy that will preserve and enhance the best of our town's primary natural resource. We do this confident that all citizens place high value on our special town setting. And we do this in the happy awareness that over one-third of this setting is a forest preserve -- a buffer against man's mismanagement of the land beyond our town borders; a last refuge for that life of the wild which once was Nature's universal gift; a shelter from winter's wind and summer's sun; a breathing space; a place of spiritual retreat; a place of adventure for young and old; a green and quiet sanctuary of hope for us all.