

# Estabrook Woods Fact Sheet

Middlesex School's Development of the Estabrook Woods  
July, 2005

## History of the Woods' Protected State

The core of the Estabrook Woods is owned by Harvard University. The preservation of this land in the early 1960s was a group effort led by Harvard's Ernst Mayr, and then Middlesex Headmaster Monk Terry. In the mid-1990s, the Campaign for the Estabrook Woods successfully preserved an additional 400+ acres surrounding the core. To date, Harvard University and all of the private landowners involved in these efforts remain firmly committed to the cause.

## Impact of Development

The proposed development will extend over a quarter of a mile into the woods, and will directly impact over 80 acres of wildlife habitat. It is estimated that the development will require the logging of over 1,500 mature trees, and the excavation of over 70,000 tons of forest soil. This amounts to nearly 4000 truckloads of soil; placed end to end, that many trucks would create a convoy over 22 miles long (the distance from Middlesex School to the Statehouse on Beacon Hill).

Estabrook Woods is ecologically important, not only to Middlesex, but to Concord, Carlisle, and the broader region. The Massachusetts Office of Environmental Affairs has designated all of Estabrook Woods as a Core Habitat area. This designation is intended to highlight particular areas within the state where protection is needed to conserve biodiversity and protect endangered species.

## Rejected Environmental Studies Program

In 2003, the school was presented with a tremendous opportunity: a generous Middlesex parent offered to endow a state-of-the-art environmental studies program - if the school would agree to preserve its portion of the Estabrook Woods. The offer was backed by firm commitments for over \$4.5 million. The proposal included a jointly run Harvard/Middlesex environmental education program, and a fully-endowed Middlesex chair for Environmental Studies. This offer was rejected by the Board of Trustees.

***This offer was recently reinstated, with the added benefit of a 5-year, risk-free trial period at the end of which the school could decide if it would like to continue with or terminate the program. It was again rejected.***

Other schools clearly attach real value to such programs: Just recently, Philips Exeter spent over \$1.3 million to create just one acre of wetlands for environmental study.

## Forest Legacy Grant

In addition, the Concord Land Conservation Trust arranged for a Federal Forest Legacy commitment of \$1.5 million to the school in return for conserving the 'B Land' immediately adjacent to the Harvard boundary within the Estabrook Woods. Once again, the offer was rejected by the Board and the funds were directed elsewhere. Under the agreement with the Town of Concord, the B Land will be available for additional development in the year 2013.

## Conditional Donations

Recently, a gracious Middlesex graduate pledged an additional \$500,000 to the school if the Board will agree to halt development and protect the Woods. Several smaller amounts have been pledged as well. We believe that additional donations of this nature will emerge as awareness grows among concerned graduates and parents.

***In total, the endowed Environmental Studies program and recent pledges total over \$5 million – most of which would be immediately available to the school if it alters course and finds an alternative solution.***

## **Student Opposition**

Over the past 10 years, the student body has consistently voiced their belief that development into the Estabrook Woods is both undesirable and unnecessary. Surveys taken in 2000, 2001 and 2004 indicate that:

- Two thirds of students surveyed (66%) believe that current athletic facilities are sufficient.
- The vast majority of students (86%) view the Estabrook Woods as an important asset of Middlesex School.
- Three quarters of the student body (73%) directly oppose cutting down the Estabrook Woods for athletic facilities, while another 13% believe it should only be done only if absolutely necessary.

## **Alternative lands**

Finding suitable alternative land is difficult and complex. However, Middlesex has foregone numerous opportunities over the years to purchase contiguous land which might have allowed the school substantial room for expansion. If Middlesex immediately put in place a policy to purchase contiguous land (following the example of a number of other New England schools), it's quite possible that, within five or ten years there would be ample space for all the additional facilities the school desires – without having to develop into the Estabrook Woods.