



Land Management Committee Warden's Manual

Overview

The purpose of the Land Management Committee is to oversee maintenance and improvements on land owned or managed by AVIS (Andover Village Improvement Society).

The Land Management Committee is comprised of members that meet on a regular basis and serve to oversee the AVIS Reservations. Each Reservation has a Warden (or multiple co-wardens) assigned for the oversight of the Reservation. Additionally, AVIS has several Rangers that are not assigned to any specific Reservation, but work on multiple Reservations and projects. AVIS Wardens and Rangers are the key persons in the maintenance and oversight of our Reservations.

Welcome

Thank you for agreeing to serve as an AVIS Warden. This manual has been prepared to guide you in your efforts as a Warden and to assure that your work remains within the laws of the Commonwealth and the Town of Andover. Your work as a Warden is extremely important in the protection and maintenance of land owned or maintained by AVIS. Your upkeep of trails (either on your own or through team work) is appreciated by our visitors who frequent our lands and are grateful for this resource, also your vigilance helps protect AVIS property from encroachment and prohibited uses.

Warden's Duties and Land Management Practices

1. Guidelines for Trail Maintenance :
 - a. Prune brush up to a six foot width and eight foot height is recommended. This leaves head room for a visitor using the trail when there is a buildup of ice and snow and branches are hanging down from the weight of the snow.
 - b. The brush along the side of the trail grows at a quick rate and should be cut back far enough so that a person will not get wet from the dew or rain on the trailside vegetation.
 - c. Clip branches back to a fork or to the main trunk to avoid sharp protruding branch stubs. Brush should be cut flush with the ground surface to avoid tripping hazards.
 - d. All trails should be cleared of downed vegetation every spring and after every major storm event.
2. Constructing New Trails: Some wardens cut new trails by themselves and others make arrangements for work parties or scout groups to help with large projects. Check with the Land Management Committee to see if approvals are needed before new trails are constructed.

3. Pick-up of Trash: Trash along the road frontage, river frontage, and trails of your reservation should be picked up every spring, fall and when you notice an accumulation of trash. If there has been a large dumping of trash on your reservation, contact the Land Management Committee for additional guidance.
4. Maintenance of Structures: Repair of existing bridges, boardwalks, and benches by leveling or replacing damaged boards. Contact the Land Management Committee for details on the process of how to purchase supplies. Also, AVIS keeps an inventory of nails, bolts, and lag bolts to assist in maintenance.
5. Identification of Hazards: Contact the Land Management Chairman about any existing or potential hazards such as large trees that could fall (or have fallen) on a neighbor's property, wires, or roads.

As the Warden you should not to discuss any damage or who may be at fault with any homeowner, this will be done by the appropriate AVIS personnel.

The Land Management Chairman will handle all such hazards including calling a professional tree company to remove the hazard.

6. Dumping on a Reservation: Walk your Reservation boundaries a few times a year to look for encroachments. AVIS does not sanction any composting or dumping of grass, leaves, or branches on our land. Note any issues identified and contact the Land Management Chairman to assist you in determining how to proceed with:
 - a. Clean-up of any dumping,
 - b. Identification of person doing the dumping, or
 - c. Contacting an adjacent home owner about their dumping.
 - d. Note, that dumping on AVIS land can be a sensitive subject and every effort should be made to maintain good neighbor relations.

The Land Management Chairman can also help you identify the location of lot lines.

7. AVIS Representative: As Warden you are the eyes and ears of AVIS and are the primary contact with users and the neighborhood. A courteous and friendly outlook can be a valuable contribution to public relations.
8. Sign Installation and Maintenance: All reservations have at least one sign identifying the reservation name and are usually placed at the trailhead access or parking area. Other sign consideration are:
 - a. Inspect wooden signs and notify the Land Management Committee when they need repair or replacement.
 - b. Other signs which are available to Wardens include: no dumping signs and dog regulations that may be appropriate to install at various locations on your reservation.
 - c. Kiosks are installed at several reservations and there is a Kiosk Warden to maintain them. Monitor the information on your kiosk and coordinate with the Kiosk Warden any updates you feel may be appropriate.

9. Tables and Benches: AVIS has standard table/bench combinations that are located on many reservations. Additional table/benches can be made, contact the Land Management Committee for guidance.
10. Complete Annual Checklist: Complete the State of the Reservation Checklist annually and forward the form to the Land Management Chairman.
11. Using Power Equipment: Chain saws and gas powered equipment are permitted on reservations under the following guidelines:
 - a. Downed trees across trails may be cut at the warden's discretion.
 - b. Chain saws and gas powered tools are discouraged from being used during group projects. If this cannot be avoided, power tools must be used isolated from the group (not within any remote proximity) so that personal injury cannot occur.
 - c. While operating power tools, appropriate safety equipment, such as ear protection, safety glasses, chaps, gloves, and hard hats, must be used. Safety equipment and hand tools are available for Wardens and work parties from the Land Management Chairman.
 - d. If any Warden does not have or is uncomfortable with using power equipment, please contact the Land Management Chairman who will arrange for a Ranger or other qualified person to assist you.
12. Rules and Regulations: All Wardens should be familiar with the current Rules and Regulation as published on the AVIS website. If a Warden notices a visitor with prohibited items or demonstrating a prohibited use and determines that this is an emergency that requires immediately attention, the Warden should call the police and identify yourself as an AVIS Warden. If the observation is of a lesser nature, the Warden may handle the situation personally (if they feel comfortable doing so) or may contact the Land Management Chairman for guidance.

Much of our AVIS land falls within the definition of a wetland under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protections Act. Land maintenance work, if within a wetland or buffer zone as defined, may only be done after AVIS has obtained the required permit.

The Land Management Committee has filed a Notice of Intent and received an Order of Conditions (090-947) that allows for specified, routine maintenance of trails on land managed by AVIS. The Order of Conditions does NOT allow us to alter a beaver dam in ANY way. Wardens should check with the Land Management Committee if there is any question about what maintenance activities are allowed within the wetlands or buffer zone.

Appreciation

Once again, we thank you for volunteering to be a Warden. It is important to us that you know your responsibilities and duties and that you have access to the Land Management Committee, Chairman, and the Board of Trustees if you have any questions. As we work together to preserve the beautiful resources under the stewardship of AVIS we look forward to working with you in the coming months and years.

Excerpt from Notice of Intent 090-947 "Ongoing Maintenance Requirements"

The 2000+ acres of conservation land contain many trails and access points. To ensure these parcels are accessible and free of hazards, the Town of Andover and A.V.I.S. are responsible for the trail maintenance. This maintenance requires that some impact to wetland and riverway resource be made at a relatively minimal level. Such impact may include, but is not limited to, the following activities:

1. Trail clearing of fallen debris ranges from simply pruning to chainsaw cutting of fallen or threatening vegetation. Trail re-routing is necessary at times to bypass large fallen trees or re-directing the trail to avoid heavily eroded areas such as river bank wash out or flooding brought on by beaver dams.
2. Opening up new access points becomes necessary as easements change or trail use warrants such change. These become branches to existing trails.
3. Trailbed restoration may include: creating drainage swales, staking retaining logs on downhill side, covering worn root-exposed areas with woodchips, and adding steps to steep grades to prevent further erosion.
4. Adding kiosks at trail entrances may be done in high usage areas.
5. Repairing existing boardwalks entails replacing parts of the structure or the entire structure using pressure treated, non-arsenic containing lumber and galvanized hardware.
6. Mowing fields and river banks with farm type equipment is done each year on several of the large meadows along the Shawsheen and Merrimack rivers.

In performing this work, minimal power equipment is involved and then only to transport material or cutting of brush or grass.



Land Maintenance Protocol for Work Activities Involving Wetlands

The Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act requires AVIS to obtain a permit before we do land maintenance work in wetlands or the buffer zone. The Land Management Committee is responsible for obtaining permits for such work from the Andover Conservation Commission. Wardens must organize and plan their land maintenance work with the Land Management Committee to assure that AVIS has applied for and received the required permit before any work regulated under the Act begins.

The Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act prohibits any filling, excavation, or other alteration of the land surface, water levels, or vegetation in wetlands, flood plains, riverfront areas or other wetland resource areas without a permit from the Andover Conservation Commission. Without a permit from the Andover Conservation Commission, we may not remove, fill, dredge, or alter any wetland, flood plain, bank, land under a water body, land within 100 feet of a wetland, or land within 200 feet of a perennial stream or river.

The term ‘alter’ is defined to include any destruction of vegetation or any change in the water table or water quality. The term wetlands includes not only areas one typically thinks of as wetlands, such as cattail marshes or red maple swamps, but also intermittent streams, riverfronts, and other areas that may be dry for a significant portion of the year.

Much of our AVIS land falls within the definition of a wetland under the Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act. Most of our land maintenance work, if within a wetland as defined, will be considered an alteration and therefore may be done only after AVIS has obtained the required permit.

Wardens may not begin any land maintenance work involving wetlands without first contacting the Land Management Committee to be sure that the required permit has been obtained. AVIS must follow this protocol carefully as violations of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act are punishable by a maximum fine of \$25,000 and/or not more than two years of imprisonment.



State of the Reservation Checklist

Reservation

Warden's Name(s) _____ Date _____

State of the Reservation

Status of trails: Good Passable Needs work

If needs work, description: _____

Diseased or dead tree(s) threatening a building, trail, power line or road: Yes No

If yes, location _____

Large pieces of trash that need to be hauled away: Yes No

If yes, description _____

Encroachment, dumping, or cutting on AVIS land: Yes No

If yes, description _____

If the reservation has an easement/license restriction, are the documented restrictions followed:
 Yes No

If no, description _____

Other needs of the reservation: _____

How can the AVIS Land Management Committee help you?

Do you need supplies? Yes No If yes, what _____

Do you need training in some area? Yes No If yes, what _____

Do you need help identifying AVIS property boundaries? Yes No

Would you like to continue as a Warden? Yes No

Would you like an additional Warden for this reservation? Yes No

Other comments: Attach pages for additional comments.

Thank you!

Please return this form to the Land Management Committee by mailing to:

AVIS
PO Box 5097
Andover, MA 01810
Land Management Committee