

Appendix G to the report of the
Ad Hoc Committee on the Site of the Research Park
(Note: These two pages were provided by Frank Golet.)

April 13, 2009

Why the Century Forest is so important for teaching...

- It has not been disturbed in 100 years, so it exhibits those characteristics that are vanishing from southern New England forests:
 - high plant and animal diversity
 - undisturbed soils
 - freedom from invasive species
- As a result, it provides a dramatic contrast with more disturbed sites, so that students can better understand the nature and effect of disturbance on the land.
- It provides a model and target criteria for habitat or ecosystem restoration.

Why should the Natural Outdoor Laboratory in the North Woods be larger than the Century Forest alone?

- For decades, URI classes have used all of the land within about 1,200 feet of Flagg Road for teaching and research. This area has been used for outreach as well (e.g., training of professional soil evaluators).
- By protecting additional forest around the Century Forest, it is buffered against future disturbances (e.g., colonization by invasive plants).
- Developing around or directly adjacent to the Century Forest would greatly reduce its value as a natural area, particularly as wildlife habitat.
- Inclusion of land outside the Century Forest will provide students with a range of related habitats to study: forested wetland, intermittent streams, vernal pools, and young and middle-aged forests.

Argument for Designation of a Natural Outdoor Laboratory in the North Woods (April 13, 2009)

- The University of Rhode Island has one of the strongest environmental science programs in the country. We enjoy an especially high rate of student placement with state and federal agencies, environmental consulting firms, and non-governmental conservation organizations.
- One of the key reasons for our success is our emphasis on hands-on, experiential learning in a real-world setting.
- The North Woods has been the principal outdoor educational resource for biological and environmental science students for decades. That area of the forest within approximately 1,200 feet of Flagg Road is currently used by at least 16 courses and more than 1,300 students annually.
- The North Woods provides a no-cost alternative to off-campus field trips, maximizes teaching time, and provides an ideal, on-campus research site for students.
- That specific area proposed for the Research and Technology Park (i.e., the “Century Forest”) is the most highly valued part of the North Woods because of its age and lack of disturbance over the last 100 years. Such forests are rare in southern Rhode Island; its location on the URI campus makes the Century Forest a truly irreplaceable educational resource.
- Given the University’s plan to build on virtually all of the developable land in the 325-acre North Woods parcel in future years, it is imperative that a significant part of that area—including the Century Forest and adjoining lands—be set aside as a Natural Outdoor Laboratory for teaching, research, and outreach.

Ultimate Goal: To guarantee that this irreplaceable educational resource will be available for study by biological and environmental science students, and to the University community at large, for as long as the University stands.