



Friends of Alewife Reservation 2010 Newsletter



HIGHLIGHTS

Changes and Challenges

- President's Message
- FAR Ecology Camp 2010

PAST FAR EVENTS:

- FAR Fundraiser
- Excel Academy Clean-up
- Candidates Walk
- Muskrat Marsh Pilot project
- Clean Water Act

DEVELOPMENTS:

- Storm Water Project
- FAR Welcomes Forester
- Reclaiming Blair Pond

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- Bird Box Build
- Walks
- Equinox Service
- Regional Panel Discussion

FAR Task Force Board Members:

Ellen Mass- *President*
 David Howe- *Treasurer*
 Bill Ackerly- *Secretary*
 Susan Agger
 Kerrie Harthan
 Ingeborg Hegemann
 Arlene Olivero
 David Morimoto
 Bob Steininger
 John Walker
 Katherine Walsh

Dear Friends,

The non-profit leadership conference at Simmons College reminded me of FAR's necessary transition in 2010 from an office staff and founder-centered operation, to a broader Task Force (TF) board empowerment and committee process. Last year, each TF member held a job based on his or her personal constituencies with an interest in utilizing the Alewife Reservation for learning and recreation. Elementary classes were taught by the TF teacher and consultant. Birding takes place once a month by a TF member. Boxes are cleaned and built by TF member direction. One of TF's business members created a FAR grouping which operates in an adjacent building. The TF structure is not a failure, but requires additional assistance and may soon form a loose coalition of groups that track, make trails, monitor for wildlife habitat, and maintain the area, a task the DCR would like to see FAR begin. FAR requires more volunteers for the summer Ecology Camp, deepening students' knowledge in conservation services, green job training and global climate watching. The Reservation wetlands will continue to be a central spot regionally and in northwest Cambridge for flood control and animal and bird adaptation as climate changes.

Our December fundraiser success indicates high levels of determination to preserve the Cambridge/Belmont Silver Maple Forest. March events will be fun and interesting and provide critical focus for future preservation..

FAR's main goal for 2010-2011 is to expand the volunteer base and number of TF members, and to create essential committees that develop the structure for greater conservation and adaptation protection of this rare urban wild in the Boston area.

Ellen Mass

FAR Ecology Camp Plans for 2010

By Allison Knight, FAR Ecology Camp Supervisor

Summer is rapidly approaching, and preparation for the FAR Summer Ecology camp is well underway. Fifteen local students from Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School will spend their summer landscaping, planting and pruning native trees, building and maintaining trails, wildlife tracking, and removing invasive plant species. The youth and I will work closely with professionals and volunteers to collaborate on these environmental learning projects.

As the FAR Summer Ecology Camp Supervisor, I will strive to ensure the program has its most successful season yet, following in the succession of Katherine Walsh. Throughout the program, the participants will receive training and education in conservation and environmental stewardship, along with exposure to job readiness, leadership and teamwork skills. In addition to fieldwork, campers will be taken on various trips to learn about other environmental projects locally, including visiting one or two other teen programs in the Boston area to see their work. My hope is that this summer is also spent enjoying nature. I am planning a camping trip at the end of the season to solidify the camper's transformations to amateur naturalists. We will study Alewife meadows, forests, and grassy fields. The environmental exploration will hopefully lead to photography, journal reflections, and continuation of the WIKI program that will be shared with the public.



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RESERVATION DEVELOPMENTS

Stormwater Project Takes Shape

FAR's Environmental Stormwater Education Program aims to connect several Boston and Cambridge classrooms to the stormwater basin and Constructed Wetlands Project supported by the City of Cambridge and the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), related to the 15 year stormwater/wetlands project for west and northwest Cambridge. FAR will work for improvement of existing science education, including supporting a local, hands-on learning experience from the complex sewer and stormwater separation process, during the fall of 2010 through the spring of 2015.

FAR seeks 10 classrooms related to in-school science curriculum and pre-engineering classes in building trades and services at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School. FAR will work with firms to learn about the project, and FAR will provide a volunteer engineer to teach the teachers. Each group using public or private transportation may participate in four to six site visits each season to the Reservation in the fall and spring to measure and observe changes and calculate hydrology processes.

Students will share their projects and findings with one another in the classroom, provide the city of Cambridge with their findings, and present their work to the FAR Task Force Board. The program is free for local classrooms or groups. FAR has just received grant funding to advance the program. Consultation workshops with volunteer engineers will lead to instructing teachers on community significance and science of the 15 year project. A physical model of the storm water basin is planned with the CRLS Technical Arts Department. A physical storm water model will be displayed in an area of public access. The model will be driven by a battery generator for water flow, and model will incorporate the basin-restored wetland. The youth will be able to see the connection between city underground infrastructure and the improvement of the environment through the charging of the river groundwater and return of wildlife. Brochures of the stormwater management plan are available from FAR.

Forrester Research Comes to the Alewife Reservation

The new kid in Discovery Park, Forrester Research, is one of the country's largest, and has the right to build on the developed land to nearly one million square feet. Incorporated enhancements include inner courtyards, auto court, north garden, honey locust trees, fitness center, and horticulturally landscaped "with grass." The building design plan is green-based. FAR looks forward to a special session with the Bulfinch Company and project designers planned for October to promote a larger green agenda. FAR will be firm about fulfilling its mission to protect the surrounding landscape, rich habitat for many mammals and birds, and ask the company to contribute towards its upkeep. The Firm can heed its purpose for transformation to attract employees, which are the Reservation's natural resources. We deeply appreciate that a chemical base line testing process has begun by the Bulfinch Co. in the Little River streams to protect them.

PAST FAR EVENTS

FAR Fund-Raiser Brings Silver Maple Woodlands Environmental and Financial Support



In December, new friends of the Reservation were made. Peter Alden, noted and prolific Audubon author, put FAR's work in geographic and wildlife context and in grand environmental vision. EkOngKar Singh Kalsa, Executive Director of the Mystic River Watershed Association called for common work among the Assoc. and other local groups, and informed us of watershed-wide issues from Chelsea to Belmont. Bill August shared our legal process and possible future gains with the forest litigation still in process at DEP. Stewart Sanders' legacy and FAR mentor was recognized with FAR's recent accomplishments. Lydia Ogilby's ancestors from a 100 year working farm on the Uplands (1845-1948) were celebrated. There is a new EPA Mystic Steering Committee that FAR now belongs to which will help the organization stay closely connected to national and state policy and local changes and improvements.

It was a rare moment for regional guests to celebrate the precious resources and hard work of our members. We are becoming more aware of in northwest Cambridge, Belmont and Arlington. \$3,600 was raised at the nice affair at the Ackerly home.

Excel Academy and Third Annual Cleanup



PAST FAR EVENTS

Blair Pond Threat

The dredging and dewatering of Blair Pond is environmentally sensible to both water retention and water quality improvement. The Pond is an extremely significant water body with a surrounding complex ecosystem for passive recreation, connected to the greater Alewife ecosystem. Menotomy Bird Club members, many from Arlington, submit their charts to Mass E- Birds and other websites. "Woody" (wood duck at Blair) became famous when placed on birding calendars. FAR is alarmed about the lack of input from professional assessors and from omission in public meetings. At the site visit, we were not taken to the area with most impact used for construction vehicles and 3 roads planned to transform the rare urban wild into a 'soft meadow'.

In this age of global warming when there are few wild habitats for keystone mammals with much woody debris as opposed to yesteryear, they become as valuable as precious gems. Blair Pond's rich bird life is based greatly on its surrounding ecosystems, as we have informed MEPA together with a professional hydrological consultant.

Comments of no wildlife assessment and no MEPA site visit to the urban wild should go to:

*Holly S. Case #1451 C/O Secretary Ian Bowles
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street #90 Boston, Ma. 02144*

Cambridge Council Candidates Take a Walk at Alewife

In November before Cambridge Council elections, Friends of Alewife Reservation and Green Decade of Cambridge co-hosted candidates guided by naturalist and assessor David Brown. FAR has published a book of noted mammal, bird, insect and plant inventories from Brown's work. Candidates Silvia Glick, Neal Leavitt, Charles Marquardt, Sam Seidel, Tom Stohlman, and Minka Van Beuzekom took campaign time to learn about the 115 acre natural resource area. John Reinhardt, President of the Mystic River Watershed Association also attended.



Brilliant leaves covered the ground but visitors viewed numerous signs of coyote, fox and otter, rare in urban areas such as Cambridge. Fox compete by putting scat next to that of otter or coyote. Over 10 signs of coyote were seen that morning.

Muskrat Marsh Pilot Project Complete

Volunteers from the Cambridge Alewife region and Boston Latin High School's *Sailing to the Stars Club* completed the "Muskrat Marsh" pilot project with approval from the Conservation Commission. The small area within a 12 acre marsh next to the Harvard Smithsonian Building is partially hydrated by East Arlington's stormwater through culverts under Rt. 2 and into a ravine (former Menotomy river bed) abutting the Belmont Uplands and the water coming east from Belmont Hill. FAR hopes to eventually restore the larger wetlands acreage with native plants with the success of the pilot. The "Discovery Park" Acorn Park Drive access is linked to Frontage Road from Lake Street in Arlington and is largely owned by Bulfinch Co. and DCR public land.

The Commission and the Bulfinch Co. approved the 1,000 sq. foot removal of common reed invasive species. Primarily, phragmites, purple loose strife, and bittersweet were removed, to allow the return of native plant species, such as Tussock Sedge. Volunteers from 3 years of FAR Ecology Camp have contributed to the project. In October, they geared in boots and gloves in muddy marsh waters, FAR and the Boston students removed remains of the stems with shears. Jacqueline Daoust supervisor for the pilot and FAR staff, noted, "*This invasive project is visible proof that the removal of the common reed from just 1,000 square feet of marsh provides room for more native species to re-grow, and now we can consider removing invasives for the entire 12 acres to increase the area's biodiversity.*"



FAR Aids in Strengthening Clean Water Act Press Conference at Alewife Reservation January



Friends of Alewife Reservation welcome Environment Massachusetts and staff to a press conference at Alewife Reservation on Jan. 12. From left to right: David Howe (Wyeth Co.), Eleanor Fort (EM), Ellen Mass (FAR), and Catherine Woodbury (DPW).

UPCOMING EVENTS

Building Bird Boxes for an Eagle

Bill Ackerly

This spring, Alewife Reservation will have eight new bird boxes thanks to Malcolm Perkins, a sophomore at Belmont High School.

A life scout with Belmont Boy Scout Troop #304, Malcolm is building bird boxes for the Friends of Alewife Reservation as part of his Eagle Scout project.

Working together, Malcolm has agreed to design, build and install boxes for the Barred Owl, the American Kestrel, the Eastern Bluebird, the Northern Flicker, the American Robin and the Wood Duck. Malcolm plans to complete the boxes in March, and install them in designated locations in the Reservation in April.

Vernal Equinox Celebration and Service

Sponsors and Participants: FAR, Tree Stewards, First Parish UU clergy, Green Streets and other organizations.

March 21 @ 2:30PM

Alewife Reservation Parking Lot on Acorn Park Dr. Rt. 2 Access
Alewife T access- Directions displayed at T

Dance, Fire, Reflections, Readings to celebrate the rare urban wild and bring spirits to woodlands preservation

Winter and Spring Bird Walks

Winter and spring, bird walks will take place on the second Saturday of the month and will meet at Alewife Kiosk. Bill Ackerly will lead the walks until May and others are welcome to lead after that. Walks begin at 8:30am slightly north of the Alewife T passenger pickup. Observed birds thus far are red-tailed hawk, mallard, hooded merganser, robin, downy woodpecker, sparrows and many more depending on participants. Boxes have been cleaned on the walks for spring nesting, and a dilemma is always raised: *Do birds have priority over mice?* (Nature is not just.)

During snow, diverse tracks are sighted such as deer, mice, squirrel, fox, dog and birds and others which we work to identify.. It is pleasant to be out in the morning enjoying the open space Of Alewife Reservation and to realize the privilege we have in Cambridge, Belmont and Arlington to appreciate and conserve the area. FAR has played a leading role in bringing attention and conservation measures to the area.



Alewife Arts Mural



Stebbins Gallery at Zero Church St., Harvard Square, will present Alewife Arts Show. Seven artists will be featured on weekends from noon to 4 throughout April. Reception is April 11th at noon.

FAR Alewife Mural, a two year project directed by David Fichter and 12 students from Cambridge Rindge and Latin High School(Alewife T -stop Display)

FAR functions as a loose coalition of Task Force representatives whose constituencies have a stake in the Alewife Reservation. We include educators, scientists, and amateur naturalists .We come together on occasion to seek advice and support from one another and help create a unified policy for the area, with the Department of Conservation and Recreation