



# Friends Groups and The Massachusetts Forest and Park Friends Network



Speaking up for our  
forests and parks

Friends of the Alewife Reservation, January 21, 2015

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# The Challenge:

An abundance of Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Forests and Urban Parks—well loved but underfunded, understaffed, under protected and vulnerable.



- Mass. forests and parks = 285,000 acres
- 167 DCR Forests and Parks
- Friends Network counts 52 Friends groups
  - Advocacy
  - Protection
  - Conservation
  - Enhanced Recreational Programs
  - Maintenance

**Our parks need Friends—Friends need to network!**



# Why Build A Friends Network?

To develop a grassroots force of volunteers who are passionate about their parks to better protect and enhance all of our state forests, parks, beaches and trails.





# Our Mission



- Connect & support Friends groups
- Foster new Friends groups
- Share programming ideas
- Distribute information
- Strengthen advocacy for all parks
- Collaborate on statewide issues affecting our parks
- Facilitate communication between Friends groups and the (DCR)
- Be a voice for the DCR when DCR can't speak for itself
- Recognize & celebrate excellence!



# Taking On the Tough Issues Since 2007



**PARK WATCH**

**Violations to Report**

**Do Not Engage or Confront Individuals!**

Vandalism • Fire • Theft • Dogs off leash • No person shall operate any OHV except in Mammoth Bar in Auburn SRA • No person shall create or access illegal trails • No person shall pursue, harass, endanger or injure any other person or animal • Report any unsafe operation which could affect public safety • Trail users must stay on designated trails • Maximum bicycle speed on all trails is 15 MPH and 5 MPH when passing pedestrians, horses and when approaching blind curves.

*By being an effective PARK WATCH, we, the public, can be better stewards of our State Park Recreation Areas.*





# Networking Friends In Action

## **Illegal off-highway vehicle enforcement and management**

- \*Stronger laws, educational outreach
- Coordinated enforcement, statewide management plan, sustainable motorized trails program

## **State forestry designations & policies**

- \* Forest Futures Visioning Program

## **Advocates for a strong DCR Stewardship Council**

## **Resource Management Plans for every forest and park**

- \*Plans approved for developing a RMP for every park!

## **DCR Volunteer policy**

- \*Adopted in 2013!

## **Park Watch Program – still working**

## **Pipeline Proposal – newest undertaking**



# Being Present

- Annual meeting of Friends groups and DCR
- DCR Stewardship Council attendance
- EOEEA Budget Hearings attendance
- Website/Facebook
- Newsletters
- Letter writing campaigns
- Action alerts
- Engaging experts
- Watchdogging public meeting procedures
- Demanding transparency
- Injecting Friends groups' perspectives into issues affecting state parklands

“Friends groups form to preserve and protect our forests and parks while helping to promote sustainable recreational use.”

From the Massachusetts Forest and Park Friends Network organizing statement

## Networking Groups Supporting DCR Parklands

- Arborway Coalition
- Bay State Trail Riders Association
- Berkshire Environmental Action Team (BEAT)
- Cochituate State Park Advisory Committee
- Franklin & Bellingham Rail Trail Committee
- Grand Trunk Trail Blazers
- Green Futures
- Mass Audubon
- Mt. Tom Citizens Advocacy Committee
- New England Mountain Bike Association
- Schooner Ernestina-Morrissey Association
- Southeastern Massachusetts Pine Barrens Alliance
- Western Massachusetts Public Lands Alliance

### Friends of:

- Alewife Reservation
- Blue Hills Reservation
- Boston Harbor Islands
- Buckland State Forest
- Dighton Rock Museum
- Douglas, Howe Park and Spencer State Forest
- Freetown-Fall River State Forest
- Hawksnest State Park
- Harold Parker State Forest
- Lawrence Heritage State Park
- Lynn Woods
- Middlesex Fells Reservation
- Mohawk Trail State Forest
- Myles Standish State Forest
- Mystic River
- Nickerson State Park
- Quabbin and Ware River
- Robinson State Park
- Scusset Beach Reservation, Inc.
- Shawme-Crowell State Forest
- Southern New England Trunkline Trail (SNETT)
- Springside Park
- Upton State Forest
- Wachusetts Mountain
- Waquoit Bay Reserve
- Western Greenway
- Willard Brook
- Wompatuck State Park





# The Power of Friends

## Enhancing Park Experience



Providing educational & recreational opportunities



# Maintaining & Restoring Forests And Parklands





# Supporting Native Plants and Wildlife





# Safeguarding Our Cultural Heritage





# Celebrating Nature, Building Community, Inspiring Wonder, Making New Friends!





# Volunteers Passionate About Public Lands!

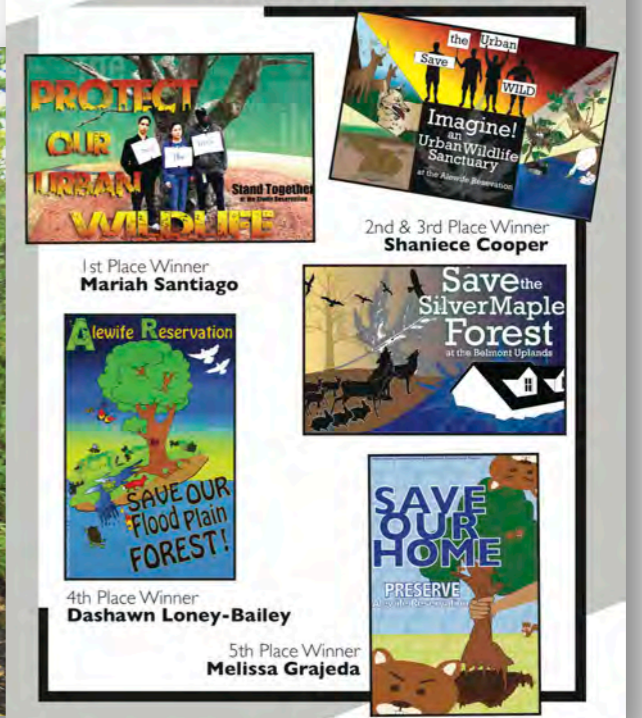




# Friends of the Alewife Reservation Going Strong Since 2000!



"Alewife Reservation  
Conservation" Poster Contest





# Thank You!

## Friends of the Alewife Reservation

*...works to protect and restore this wild area and the surrounding area for the water quality, native plants, animals and over 90 bird species with paths for walking, running and biking, recreation, and for classroom education and research. We regularly steward and preserve the Reservation area for wildlife and for the enjoyment of present and future generations.*