**For immediate release**

From: The Silver Maple Forest Alliance

*Prudential and Partners Hide Behind Affordable Housing to Destroy a Floodplain Forest*

 Prudential Financial, on its website, touts commitment to “doing business the right way” “…minimizing the impact of its business activities on the environment.” At this moment, however, Prudential Real Estate Investments (the real estate arm of Prudential Financial) is poised to destroy one of metropolitan Boston’s most vital floodplain ecosystems, a silver maple forest or “Belmont Uplands” as part of a contiguous wildlife and river corridor flowing from west to east, and sometimes in reverse. The Alewife Reservation is managed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation and land is City of Cambridge and town of Belmont with ongoing massive housing construction already added to Mystic River watershed’s Upper Alewife Basin. Now Prudential and partners have begun sediment and erosion work, and will benefit with big bucks while hiding behind Chapter 40B statue which requires all municipalities to reach 10 percent affordable housing.

Civic-minded communities promote the ‘affordable’ goal in many ways. However, the present Belmont 300 unit project is a gross misuse of this statue with bare minimum of ‘affordables’ on borders of three towns. In this age of climate change, elected officials are allowing the removal of the 100 year flood plan safety net of pervious surfaces for tens of thousands of Somerville, Cambridge, Arlington, Medford residents by clear-cutting the Basin’s only floodplain forest which remains in the Alewife watershed, exposing households to and extreme weather. Recent estimates by Lesley University suggest the 15 acre Silver Maple Forest, home to hundreds of native species including deer, fox, wolves, and river otters, will help us avoid over $13 million in flood damage alone over the next 20 years. Precipitation data has also indicated a 36 percent rise in storm water run off.

Developers depict the Silver Maple Forest vs. “Residents of Acorn Park Drive” as a conflict between conservationists and affordable housing advocates. Environmentalists at Alewife Reservation standing for the silver maples are asking all to view closely where the project is and to note its low sea elevation with coming rise in this level which, according to US Army Corps of Engineers places much of the Basin under water. Prudential Financial and their partners are the only ones who stand to gain from this project, while the town and city residents and wildlife will lose a vital floodplain habitat and the protection for now and future generations. We urge affordable housing advocates and other concerned citizens to gather with region-wide silver maple forest advocates by standing for these valuable floodplain trees.

The Silver Maple Forest Alliance, includes representatives from the Friend’s of the Alewife Reservation, Green Cambridge, the Mystic River Watershed Association, Lesley University’s Division of Science and Mathematics, the Fresh Pond Resident’s Alliance, the Climate Action Coalition and other concerned individuals. The Alliance holds a protest rally Tuesday, 10/14, from 7:30 - 9:00 am, at the corner of Acorn Park Drive and Frontage Rd. in Belmont on the Cambridge and Arlington line, at the confluence of these 3 communities.

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