

The Arlington Land Trust is a community-based nonprofit organization established in 2000 to protect land in Arlington. As a membership organization, ALT accepts donations and welcomes volunteers to support its work.

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The Spy Pond shoreline during the summer drought.

Facing up to Climate Change

August and July of 2016 were the hottest months ever recorded, and since October of 2015 we've experienced a streak of 11 straight months of record-breaking temperatures. Evidence for changes in the earth's climate is compelling and can be measured everywhere – from melting polar ice caps and rising ocean temperatures to increases in severe weather events and heat waves.

There is overwhelming scientific consensus that these changes are driven by human-derived greenhouse gas emissions, and many countries are taking action to prevent and prepare for climate change impacts. The Paris Agreement negotiated at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in 2015 has been signed by 193 and ratified by 97 countries so far, and became international law on November 4, 2016.

Our region has experienced a historic drought, late-season frost damage following a mild winter that wiped out an entire crop of peaches, the intense winter of 2015, and coastal and inland flooding following storms and hurricanes. In Arlington, climate change is most likely to cause problems with inland flooding and significant stormwater runoff, excessive heat, the timing of seasons, more extreme weather and damaging storms, and increases in vector-borne diseases, such as Lyme disease. It is also likely that drought will continue to be an issue, with significant impacts on local plants, animals, agriculture, and outdoor public spaces. Our work to protect the natural resources of Spy Pond and Elizabeth Island is one small but important part of addressing these impacts.

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A Statewide Strategy

In September, Governor Charlie Baker signed Executive Order 569, "Establishing an Integrated Climate Change Strategy for the Commonwealth." The Order directs agencies within the administration to develop and implement an integrated strategy that leverages state resources to combat climate change and prepare for its impacts through mitigation, renewable energy, and adaptation and resiliency.

The state offices of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) and Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) will be the key partners in developing a comprehensive adaptation plan. Every agency will have to complete an assessment that identifies vulnerabilities in their assets, mission areas, and the services they provide. A key piece of the Executive Order is providing support to cities and towns that are on the front lines of climate change. EOEEA and EOPSS are developing a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program to provide

technical assistance and grants to communities so they can complete vulnerability assessments and incorporate results into local planning, policy making, and spending.

The state has also been working to mitigate climate change through aggressive greenhouse gas reductions. Under the Massachusetts Global Warming Solutions Act of 2008, the state must reduce 2020 emissions by 25 percent below 1990 levels and achieve an 80 percent reduction by 2050, and also set interim limits for 2030 and 2040. In May, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) must promulgate regulations to ensure that 2020 emissions limits are achieved. To comply with this ruling, Executive Order 569 further requires the DEP to engage stakeholders, examine emission limits from a range of sectors, and outline a timeline to promulgate regulations to ensure the state meets these carbon reduction targets.

Massachusetts continues to lead the nation in energy efficiency, which remains the most cost effective method of reducing ratepayer costs and lowering greenhouse emissions. Building on this record, Governor Baker recently signed comprehensive energy diversification legislation which is intended to provide new opportunities for clean energy deployment and energy efficiency.

As we learned from Town Manager Adam Chapdelaine at last year's annual meeting, Arlington, too, has taken steps to reduce our municipal energy consumption, including the installation of LED streetlights and new Energy Management Systems at most schools. The Town has been named a Green Community through the state's Green Community program, and we expect this designation will help Arlington access new state funds and programs to complete vulnerability assessments and continue to prepare the community for the impacts of climate change.

Message from the President



Dear Arlington Land Trust Members and Friends,

First, thank you for your continued support of the Arlington Land Trust! Together with you – one of nearly 300 individual and family members – our all-volunteer nonprofit has had another great year.

On Elizabeth Island we worked with the Appalachian Mountain Club trails crew to control erosion and protect the Island for the long-term, and we brought about 120 people out to the Island for the annual Spy Pond Fun Day. Thanks again to the Friends of Spy Pond Park for their great organizing efforts!

We continue to work with the owners of Arlington 360 and the Conservation Commission to ensure that the parks and open space at the former Symmes site off Summer Street are well maintained, according to the terms of our joint conservation restriction. During the summer a herd of very cute, and very hungry, goats was "hired" to eat poison ivy and other invasive plants.

ALT welcomed two new board members during the year. Katie Theoharides is the former Executive Director of the Hilltown Land Trust in western Massachusetts and is currently involved with climate change adaptation work for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. We are also pleased that Carol Kowalski, one of ALT's founders, has rejoined the board. She served as Arlington's Planning Director from 2009 to 2015, and is now Lexington's Assistant Town Manager for Development.

This year, more than ever, it is clear that local actions and engagement matter. Did you know that this election cycle was the best yet for the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act, with 11 communities adopting it, including Boston, and that nationally of the 86 ballot measures for land protection, 68 passed? We are all the stewards of our environment, and that stewardship has to start at home. Please let us know your ideas for new ways to engage people with land protection, conservation, and climate change.

I hope you to see you at our Annual Meeting on Tuesday, January 24, 7 - 9 pm at the Central School on Maple St. Rebecca Davis, Deputy Director at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council and an Arlington resident, will discuss the MAPC regional climate change adaptation strategy and how Arlington fits in.

Warm regards,

Jennifer Ryan
President



Box steps will control erosion and provide safer passage to Elizabeth Island trails.

New Steps and Erosion Controls Installed on Elizabeth Island

Wooden steps and erosion control bars were installed at two sections of steep slopes on Elizabeth Island in early November. The purpose of this work is to protect native vegetation and water quality, and to provide visitors safer routes from the boat landings to trails in the interior of the island.

Many visitors to Elizabeth Island during Spy Pond Fun Day and at other times have had to scramble up unstable gravel slopes. As the owner and steward of this valuable resource in Spy Pond, the Arlington Land Trust has been concerned about both public safety and continued erosion in those areas.

This remediation work was accomplished by a skilled team from the Appalachian Mountain Club's trail-building program, following an extensive planning and review process. An initial assessment by the Mass Audubon Ecological Extension Service led to the preparation of a Notice of Intent proposal to the Arlington Conservation Commission, which oversees any such work in the town's water resource areas.

The AMC team arrived in Arlington on October 31. With help from several ALT board members, they loaded pre-ordered lumber, rebar, hay bales, tools, and camping gear into two canoes and a motorboat generously provided by the Arlington/Belmont Crew and driver Katie Chicojay.

Over the next four days, the crew built a graded set of water bars to direct runoff to the sides of the slope at the north landing, and a stairway of box steps at the east landing. After digging out the soil and installing the lumber, the crew regraded the sides of the slopes, spread a conservation-approved grass mix, and covered the seeded area with hay to protect it until the grass takes hold in the spring.

Spy Pond Fun Day

On Saturday afternoon, September 10, hundreds of kids and adults enjoyed exploring Spy Pond Park, participating in a vast array of activities, and learning about how to care for the pond's environment at the annual Fun Day sponsored by the Friends of Spy Pond Park with other groups, including the Arlington Land Trust.

According to the organizers activities included:

- Over 120 people got boat rides to Elizabeth Island with the Arlington Land Trust and the Arlington/Belmont Crew team;
- Over three cartons of birch bark were turned into decorated boats and launched in the pond;
- Over 150 nature-puzzles were solved to win prizes, some donated by the Book Rack;
- Over a dozen families searched the park for Spy Pond History Mystery clues or leaf species;
- A musical parade of nature-crown-wearing children led to the dedication of the "Penny the Swan" sculpture.

Thanks to ALT board members and other volunteers for their participation in this popular event. It's wonderful to see the smiles of those enjoying their first visit to Elizabeth Island and to know that we are helping to engender a healthy respect for our local natural resources in residents of all ages.

Conservation Regulations Enforced

In a controversial case of residential development at 47 Spy Pond Lane, the Conservation Commission ruled in October against a proposal to build two new houses on a large single-family lot. The Land Trust and many other local organizations and residents advocated for the commission to impose its authority to reject the development because it would have violated Arlington's conservation regulations as well as the state's less-stringent Wetlands Protection Act. As the owner and steward of Elizabeth Island, the Land Trust seeks to ensure healthy water quality, vegetation, and wildlife in and around Spy Pond, and will continue to monitor inappropriate development in the area. We thank the commission for its decision in this case.

Spy Pond Shoreline Protection Project

In the spring of 2013, members of the Arlington Conservation Commission noticed that the shoreline along Spy Pond was deteriorating, with the potential for long-term bank failure adjacent to Spy Pond Park. The erosion was a result of high recreational pressure and storm-water inputs from overland flow and wave/ice action.

Following passage of the Community Preservation Act, the commission applied for funding in the FY2017 funding cycle and was awarded \$49,760 for a feasibility study and detailed survey of four Town-owned parcels (Spy Pond Park, Scannell Field, land adjacent to the Boys and Girls Club, and Spring Valley Street). The work undertaken during 2016 found that the Spy Pond Park shoreline is marginally stable with scattered instances of loss of vegetation, compacted soils, and uncontrolled access. The other three areas, however, present unstable conditions for similar reasons.

The goals of the project are to preserve, stabilize and strengthen the pond's banks to control erosion; protect and enhance wildlife habitat; prevent unauthorized paths; broaden and strengthen constituency groups; increase water quality and recreational opportunities; and improve stormwater infiltration. The commission is submitting a phase two CPA grant application for FY2018 to implement the project's recommendations.

Brian Rehrig



Goats at work along Summer Street.

Goats Help Control Invasive Plants in Symmes Woods

Last June and July six goats were introduced into Arlington to help control invasive poison ivy, oriental bittersweet, and other plants growing in the woods along Summer Street. The woods are owned and managed by Arlington 360, but are protected by a conservation restriction held by the Arlington Land Trust and Conservation

Commission, which jointly oversee stewardship of the parks and open spaces on the property.

The use of goats, loaned by The Goatscaping Company of Duxbury, was a win-win solution for all parties involved, and for many residents who stopped by to watch them at work. This was such a successful and environmentally sensitive approach to a "thorny" problem that the goats were subsequently hired to clear invasive undergrowth at Menotomy Rocks Park. It's likely they will be back again next year to continue their clean-up campaign in Arlington.

Mugar Project Update

The proposed development of the Mugar parcel in East Arlington is headed to the state Housing Appeals Committee for the next round of procedural argument.

Arlington's Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) has asserted that the Town has met one of the "safe harbor" thresholds available under Chapter 40B, that of having 1.5 percent of eligible land area devoted to affordable housing. If achieved, that status gives the Town more control over 40B projects and limits the developer's ability to override local zoning and wetlands protections.

Oaktree Development, the firm proposing the 219-unit Mugar project, disputed the Town's findings, and in its November 25 decision the state Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) agreed with Oaktree. These are technical arguments involving a precise reading of the state statutes, and they have never been tested in court. It is likely that the Housing Appeals Committee, a quasi-judicial body housed within DHCD, will side with the developer as it does in the vast majority of cases.

HAC's decision may take up to eight months, and cannot immediately be appealed to a court of law by either party. The hearing process on the project itself would have to continue to a conclusion (either an approval, a rejection, or an approval with conditions). At that time, whichever party continued to dispute the 1.5 percent calculation could raise it as an issue in a court challenge.

ALT Advocacy

The Arlington Land Trust continues to advocate strongly for the protection and conservation of the Mugar land in East Arlington. The following letter to the Zoning Board of Appeals (slightly shortened and adapted for reproduction here) is just one recent example of ALT board outreach on this critical issue facing Arlington. We will continue to speak out to protect this vulnerable environment, and we welcome your assistance in this effort. We are in for a long and complicated legal fight

September 27, 2016

Dear Members of the Zoning Board of Appeals

Arlington Land Trust (ALT) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and enhancement of the open spaces of Arlington for the improvement of our community's quality of life and environmental health, for the benefit of all.

ALT has long supported the Town of Arlington's well-established policy goal of permanently protecting the Mugar site. For decades both the Town of Arlington and the Commonwealth have identified and prioritized this site as needed for conservation, most recently articulated in the Town's Master Plan and Open Space and Recreation Plan, both adopted in 2015, and explicitly endorsed by Town Meeting. The benefits of conservation of the parcel extend throughout the Alewife subwatershed in Arlington, Belmont, Somerville and Medford; the ill effects of floodplain development similarly transcend municipal boundaries. Decades of observation and experience of flooding in the area cannot be ignored in considering the local and regional impacts of this proposed project.

The Mugar site has been degraded over time by its owners who have allowed debris to be dumped and wetlands to be covered over. The site has significant potential for restoration and greatly increased contribution to the resilience of the Alewife subwatershed, as suggested by the US Army Corps of Engineers when it included the parcel in a proposed study of wetlands restoration sites.

Even in its current degraded state, however, the site performs a critical public safety role by storing and buffering floodwater, and its pervious soils and wetlands filter pollutants and provide a slow release of groundwater to streams during dry weather. In the face of the reality of increasing frequency and severity of storm events, removing the buffering potential of this site is against the best interests of the entire region.

To ensure that the environmental resources and potential of the site are properly considered, we urge you to follow the recommendation of the August 15, 2015 report received by the Town from Nover-Armstrong Associates, Inc. in connection with its review of the applicant's application to MassHousing for site review. The report recommends that "due to the historical evidence of the Alewife Brook (Little River) flooding impacting the Site and adjacent neighborhoods," the Board is urged to "deny all waivers requested by the applicant relating to the Arlington Wetlands Protection Bylaw. Waiver of the Wetland Bylaw would prevent the

[Conservation] Commission from taking into account evidence of flooding of residences located beyond the Zone AE limits shown on FEMA's maps."

The following waiver requests by the applicant should all be denied, and full compliance required with the provisions of each law and regulation: Wetland Protection By-law, Wetland Protection Regulations, Stormwater Mitigation, Building in Floodplain, Open Space Regulations for PUD, Floodplain District, Inland Wetland District, Environmental Design Review, and Filing of Any Water or Wet Area.

It is worth noting that this project comes to your Board by virtue of the issuance by MassHousing of a December 4, 2015 "site approval" letter [see ALT News, Fall 2015]. Among the findings that MassHousing must make to grant site approval is "that the conceptual project design is generally appropriate for the site on which it is located, taking into consideration factors that may include proposed use, conceptual site plan and building massing, topography, environmental resources, and integration into existing development patterns (such finding, with supporting reasoning, to be set forth in reasonable detail)." The Nover-Armstrong report finds that the applicant "has not demonstrated that the Site can accommodate the project without having detrimental impacts to wetland resources and existing flooding conditions on the Site and surrounding neighborhood."

In fact, MassHousing makes not even a pretense of having seriously considering the environmental resources of the site and the impacts of the proposed development. It makes the required finding that the project is "generally appropriate for the site" with no supporting reasoning whatsoever. Perversely, it offers up the fact that the state Department of Conservation and Recreation declared the Mugar site one of the highest-ranking priorities for conservation in the metropolitan region. Then, rather than giving that determination by a sister state agency some weight against development, it instead cites favorably that the new south-facing apartments will enjoy a view of what's left of the parcel after seven acres are consumed by development.

We expect that this egregious and deeply flawed action by MassHousing will be the subject of further inquiry and action by the Town of Arlington at the appropriate time in the process of project review.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Very truly yours,
Arlington Land Trust, Inc.

Thanks to you! The Arlington Land Trust thanks its members and friends for their generous contributions through November 2016.

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GIFTS for the Long Run

Bequests and Donations of Securities

Member dues and donations to the annual fund usually cover the basic operating costs such as printing, mailing, insurance, and publicity for the volunteer-led Arlington Land Trust. The Land Trust has also established special funds to cover the costs of stewardship, prepare for the acquisition of new properties or conservation easements, and monitor and protect conserved properties for the long run. Bequests, IRA distributions, and gifts of appreciated stock are some of the ways to supplement these existing funds.

ALT recently tapped into our Stewardship Fund to pay the cost of erosion control bars and wooden steps on Elizabeth Island to reduce degradation of the island's paths. This fund has also been used to provide a baseline study of plants on the protected Symmes/Arlington 360 land, which will help ALT monitor the welfare of native plants and the status of invasive plants in need of removal.

The ALT Board is also working to increase the value of a fund that may be used for professional services such as land surveys, attorney fees, and botanical surveys required prior to the acquisition of future easements and fee lands in need of conservation restrictions. We need your help to expand our open space conservation efforts and to ensure the good health of Arlington's conserved lands in perpetuity.

For More Information

For help on the easy process of donating securities, designating a gift to Arlington Land Trust in your will, or establishing other special gifts, please contact the ALT Treasurer at info@arlingtonlandtrust.org. He will provide assistance on how and where to send gifts of securities, the language required to provide gifts to ALT through your will, or other questions. Thank you for your consideration.

Recent Memorial Gifts

The Arlington Land Trust learned earlier this year that member Kristen Garrigus, who passed away at home in January 2016 after a battle with cancer, had named ALT as one of several organizations to which friends and family might make memorial gifts in her honor. More than \$500 has been donated in her memory since then. We are pleased to dedicate these gifts to her personal priority, the protection of the Mugar property. We are grateful to Kristen, her husband Marc Garrigus, and their family and friends for their thoughtfulness.

ALT Membership Renewal

If you have not already renewed your ALT membership for 2017, please respond to our annual mailing, go to the website (www.arlingtonlandtrust.org) to download a copy of the membership form, or sign up at www.networkforgood.org to renew online. Thank you again for your continuing support. If you have any questions, please contact ALT at: info@arlingtonlandtrust.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS

ALT Annual Meeting

Tuesday, January 24, 2017 at 7 pm
Central School, Arlington
Corner of Academy and Maple Streets

Special Guest:

Rebecca Davis, Deputy Director
Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Rebecca Davis will describe MAPC's development of a Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, which aims to prepare recommendations for local, regional, and state action to reduce vulnerability to the anticipated impacts of climate change.

The Strategy builds on findings of the Massachusetts Climate Change Adaptation Report (2011) and many other pertinent publications developed to date. In addition to outlining short and long-term land use changes, the Strategy includes actions for mitigation of greenhouse gas

emissions on private and public properties, a crucial first step in adapting to climate change.

Join the conversation about Arlington's own role in addressing our climate future within this statewide context.

27th Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference

Saturday, March 25 - Worcester, MA

The theme for the 2017 Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition's annual conference is "Scaling Up: Meeting New Challenges." This day-long training and networking event provides land trust board members and staff, parks administrators and advocates, watershed organizations, trails and friends associations, municipal commission members, and others interested in land

conservation with the information, skills, and connections they need to be most effective. E.O. Wilson, the noted biologist, researcher, theorist, naturalist and author, will be the plenary speaker.

Workshops will address these land conservation topics:

- Theme and Emerging Issues
- Land Management and Stewardship
- Land Protection Tools and Techniques
- Legal, Tax and Compliance Matters
- Organizational Management and Fundraising
- Urban and Community Conservation

For more information, contact Kathy McGrath at kmcgrath@massland.org

ALT Annual Meeting
Tuesday, January 24, 2017
7-9 pm
Central School
27 Maple Street, Arlington
"A Regional Climate Change
Adaptation Strategy
and What Arlington Can Do"