

Conservation Commission

The Arlington Conservation Commission ("ACC") is required by state and town laws to protect and preserve wetlands, waterways, and their surrounding areas. The ACC is comprised of seven volunteer Commissioners and two volunteer Associate Commissioners, who are appointed by the Town Manager with the approval of the Select Board, and supported by the full-time professional Environmental Planner & Conservation Agent at bimonthly meetings and onsite visits. The ACC is mandated to protect wetlands, waterways, water supplies, fisheries, wildlife, and wildlife habitat as well as regulate floodplain activities through its administration of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the Arlington Bylaw for Wetlands Protection.

In 2020, the ACC held 24 public meetings, and provided coordination, monitoring, permit review, and consultation on numerous residential, commercial, and municipal projects around Town. The ACC reviewed 21 applications. Of the 21 applications, the Commission issued 10 Permits/Orders of Conditions, 5 Determinations of Applicability, and six Certificates of Compliance. The ACC and its Agent conducted over 60 site visits/inspections.

The ACC also protects and manages the Town's Conservation Lands and natural resources through collaboration with other entities and grants from various sources, as described below.

Spy Pond Shoreline Protection Project Completion

The goals of this project included preserve, stabilize, and strengthen the pond's banks to control erosion; protect and enhance wildlife habitat; prevent unauthorized paths; broaden and strengthen constituency groups; improve water quality and recreational opportunities; and improve stormwater infiltration. Construction elements of this project included a new porous pathway through the park, a new timber overlook, a rain garden/vegetated detention basin, and native plantings along the pond banks. The project was completed in Fall 2020. Various funding sources funded this project, including a Community Preservation Act grant (\$552,900), a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (\$40,040), a Community Development Block grant (\$94,000), a Mass Audubon's Judy Record Fund grant (\$10,000), and a donation from the Friends of Spy Pond Park (\$5,000).



The Spy Pond Project included constructing a biobasin next to Scannell Field to improve stormwater quality before entering Spy Pond. (credit: Arlington Conservation Commission)

Wellington Park & Mill Brook

In 2018, Arlington received one of the first Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness MVP action grants, in the amount of almost \$400,000 to increase flood storage capacity in Wellington Park, along Mill Brook. This increased flood storage capacity is approximately 70 cubic yards. Project construction included building the flood storage channel, removing invasive plant species, building a boardwalk, installing a porous asphalt pathway, and installing educational signage. In 2020, Arlington and the Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA) led the design effort for the last phase of this project, to improve the recreational amenities of the park. The final design includes extending the porous asphalt pathway through the park to the existing bridge over Mill Brook, the construction of an exploration play area, the installation of a biobasin, and replanting of native riverine plants along Mill Brook. The final phase of this project will begin construction in 2021.

Water Bodies Oversight

The ACC, through its Water Bodies Working Group, continued monitoring important water bodies in town, including Spy Pond, the Arlington Reservoir, and Hill's Pond in Monotony Rocks Park.

Conservation Land Stewards

The ACC's citizen-volunteer organization, Arlington Land Stewards (ALS), assists in managing 28 Town-owned conservation lands comprising approximately 53 acres. Land Stewards monitor, coordinate, and maintain conservation land of their choice, with guidance from the ACC.

Arlington Great Meadows

Arlington's Great Meadows (AGM) are comprised of 193 acres, making it Arlington's largest open space parcel, although located in East Lexington. AGM is mostly wetlands, but contain many upland trails that make connections to the Arlington Reservoir and the Whipple Hill conservation area through the ACROSS Trail System. The Friends of Arlington's Great Meadows (FoAGM) are active in increasing Arlington's awareness of this wonderful area. In 2020, FoAGM organized multiple walks at AGM and boardwalk restoration events.

FoAGM volunteers maintain the trails and boardwalks at the Meadows. This includes removing invasive plants, consisting primarily of Japanese Knotweed, along the Minuteman Bikeway. More information on FoAGM can be found at: www.FoAGM.org.

A current concern is the redevelopment of the former nursing site off Emerson Garden Road that will affect a popular access point. Officials in Arlington and Lexington are committed to maintaining public access at this location.

Goals and Beyond

The ACC will continue to encourage, support, and assist the various volunteer and environmental advocacy groups that are dedicated to preserving the Town's valued conservation lands and other open spaces. These groups include, among others: Arlington Land Stewards, Arlington Land Trust, Open Space Committee, Friends of Arlington's Great Meadows, Friends of Spy Pond Park, Friends of Menotomy Rock Park, and the Mystic River Watershed Association. Additional specific goals include the following:

- Host additional collaborative community clean-up and educational events
- Strengthen and update regulations for performance standards, permitting efficiency, and process clarity
- Improve the stewardship of conservation lands and other town open spaces
- Improve communication and educational outreach to residents in resource areas

Acknowledgments

ACC sincerely thanks all individuals and organizations that contributed directly or indirectly to the activities of its 55th year. Many special thanks go to the active citizenry that attended hearings and informed the Commission's discussions and the scores of volunteers who came out for clean-up projects, assisted as land stewards, or participated in the many Friends groups that work to preserve the Town's natural resources and conservation lands.