

Conservation Commission

The Arlington Conservation Commission ("ACC") is required by state and ~~local 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 works to ensure that all construction and development projects that may alter any wetlands, floodplains, rivers, streams, ponds, and/or lakes are in compliance with state and ~~local town~~ regulations. The ACC is mandated to protect wetlands, waterways, water supplies, fisheries, wildlife, and wildlife habitat as well as regulate activities in a floodplain through its administration of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the Arlington Bylaw for Wetlands Protection.

In 2019, 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 32 applications. Of the 32 applications, the Commission issued 14 Permits/Orders of Conditions, 10 Determinations of Applicability, and eight Certificates of Compliance. The ACC and its Agent also conducted over ~~forty-five (45)~~ site visits/inspections.

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

Mystic Riverfront Restoration Project

Completed in 2019, this project created a native riverbank (riparian) habitat and improved stormwater infrastructure, ultimately improving stormwater quality that enters the Mystic River. In the fall of 2016, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) awarded the Town \$47,325 through the Natural Resource Damages Assessment and Restoration Program. The grant funded the creation of a native riverbank (riparian) habitat and improved stormwater infrastructure, ultimately improving stormwater quality. The project is located along the Mystic River at the end of Park Street in the area that was directly impacted by oil released from a tanker truck that overturned nearby on Route 60 in May 2013. This project was completed in 2019. The project was funded in the fall of 2016, the by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) awarded the Town \$47,325 through a \$47,325 grant under the Natural Resource Damages Assessment and Restoration Program.



The restored outfall improves the quality of stormwater running directly into Mystic River.

Spy Pond Shoreline Protection Project

A Community Preservation Act grant of \$552,900 was awarded for FY2018 for shoreline stabilization on Town land along Spy Pond. The Land and Water Conservation program of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs awarded the Town \$40,040 for trail work in Spy Pond Park. The project also received CDBG-granted \$94,000 in Community Development Block Grants to the project for trail work and ADA compliance. The Friends of Spy Pond Park donated \$5,000 to project work. The Mass Audubon's Judy Record ~~f~~Eund awarded \$10,000 to the project. The goals of this project include 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 project will be completed in early 2020.



The Spy Pond Project included resurfacing the pathway with an ADA accessible porous pavement.

Wellington Park & Mill Brook

In 2018, Arlington received a one of the first State Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs' Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness MVP action grants, of 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 and is to decrease flooding downstream. Project construction included building the flood storage channel, removing invasive plant species, building a boardwalk, installing a porous asphalt pathway, and installing educational signage. This construction project directly aligns with the priorities identified in the MVP planning process and dove-tails with the CPA project in this same area (lead by MyRWA) to improve public access and recreational opportunities in the Mill Brook Corridor. In 2020, Arlington and MyRWA will lead a design effort for the last phase of this project, to improve the recreational amenities of the park.



The flood storage area slows floodwaters downstream of Wellington Park.

Conservation Land Stewards

The ACC's citizen-volunteer organization, Arlington Land Stewards (ALS), has assisted 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. Additional outreach was conducted this year to increase stewardship and identify opportunities for clean-up events, including the Earth Day Clean-Up at Hills Hill, with 35 local volunteers. The Land Stewards also hosted an invasive plant species management training for residents interested in learning more about invasive species.

Water Bodies Oversight

The ACC, through its Water Bodies Working Group, continued investigation of the iron flocculation at the McClellan Park Detention Ponds to improve the site's aesthetic, recreational, and wildlife values and functions. Technical contractor Woods Hole Group submitted a final report about the analysis to the ~~Arlington Conservation Commission~~ACC and it is available ?????.



Sampling at Reeds Brook in McClennen Park.

In addition to its Spy Pond Shoreline Protection Project, the ACC has also worked closely with the Spy Pond Committee to ensure the health and well-being of Spy Pond and with the MassDOT to permit dredging the Spy Pond sand bar. ACC is generally working towards reducing chemical usage to control invasive plants in these prized environmental resource and recreational areas.

Arlington Reservoir Master Plan

The Reservoir Master Plan was completed in 2018 and the capital improvement projects identified therein were initiated in 2018. The goal of the Master Plan was to assess all aspects of the Reservoir, considering terrestrial and aquatic issues from both environmental and recreational perspectives. Led by the Park and Recreation Commission, the ACC and the Vision 2020 Reservoir Committee have provided input. Phase 1 construction of this master plan began in Fall 2019, and includes a new water treatment and pump system for the bathing beach. Future phases will address some of the broader environmental issues as well as trail system work.

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 through the ACROSS Trail System make connections to the Arlington Reservoir and the Whipple Hill conservation area. The Friends of Arlington's Great Meadows (FoAGM) are active in increasing Arlington's awareness of this wonderful area. In 2019, FoAGM organized multiple walks at AGM and distributed information at Town Day.

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.

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:

- Revision of Conservation Land Stewards program materials and incorporation of educational trainings.
- Updating the Arlington Regulations for Wetlands Protection.
- Outreach on Climate Change Resilience guidance in local wetland bylaws and regulations.
- Additional collaborative Community Clean-Up events.

Acknowledgments

ACC sincerely thanks all individuals and organizations that contributed directly or indirectly to the activities of its 54th 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 cleanup projects, assisted as land stewards, or participated in the many Friends groups that work to preserve the Town's natural resources and conservation lands. The ACC would like to thank Nathaniel Stevens, who served as the Conservation Commission Chair from 2001-2019, for his superb leadership and tremendous commitment to Arlington's conservation efforts. ACC would like to welcome Susan Chapnick as the new Commission Chair and Chuck Tirone as the new Commission Vice Chair.