



the Newton Conservators

NEWSLETTER

Spring Issue

<http://www.newtonconservators.org>

April 2000

Message from the President

Earth Day and Arbor Day

Taking Stock of Environmental Initiatives in Newton

By Doug Dickson

At his biweekly press conference on April 11th, Mayor Cohen recounted a range of environmental initiatives that are currently underway in the city. They include:

- A campaign to increase the recycling of white paper and other recyclable materials.
- Newton's designation as a partner in the Department of Energy's Million Solar Roofs Project.
- The city's eleventh annual Tree City USA award and continuing progress toward the Newton 2000 Trees goal.
- Ongoing implementation of Newton's comprehensive Integrated Pest Management policy in all city properties and buildings, including schools. 1999 was a pesticide-free season for Newton's athletic fields and parks.
- Announcement of support by the Mayor and Superintendent of Schools for the Children's and Families' Protection Act that would limit use of pesticides in schools.

In addition, the city continues its implementation of the recently passed Tree Preservation Ordinance. This landmark legislation has sparked interest from communities across the state and positions Newton as the regional leader in preserving and replacing trees during construction.

At a press conference on April 28th, Reps. Ruth Balser and Kay Khan will announce a decision by the Mass Pike to plan more than 1000 trees along

the highway in Newtonville. This will provide a visual as well as sound barrier for nearby residents.

The participation of hundreds of citizens in the Newton Serves volunteer community service day in early April and the subsequent Charles River Earth Day Clean-up resulted in the clean-up and improvement of dozens of public building grounds and open spaces across the city.

Plans are underway to announce the formation of a Newton Parks Foundation that will raise funds for maintenance and improvement of city properties, following the model of the Newton Schools Foundation.

A draft of Newton's Framework Plan, precursor to a comprehensive planning document for the city, was unveiled to a large crowd of Newton residents at a public meeting in April. When final, the document will set the stage for open space planning and land use policy well into the future.

The Mayor announced in his annual budget speech that he has proposed \$25,000 for signage, improvements to entrances and other amenities at conservation areas through out the city. (The Conservators had previously approved a challenge grant for this purpose.) The Mayor also included in the FY2001 budget a \$10,000 expenditure for seasonal employees to continue maintenance of highly visible sites previously covered by income from the now-depleted Recycling Fund.

This is an impressive list of initiatives and accomplishments and it reflects the strong interest in and support for environmental responsibility within the Newton community. But a list of this type wouldn't be complete if it didn't also include some disappointments and challenges yet to be converted into success stories. Here are just a few:

The Community Preservation Act, which would provide funding for acquisition, preservation and maintenance of open space as well as affordable housing and historic preservation, languishes in a joint conference committee of the State Legislature after having been passed by large margins in both the House and the Senate.

A broadly supported proposal to combat the Hemlock woolly adelgid infestation at Hemlock Gorge with a hybrid Japanese ladybug was vetoed by the Governor, with no effort made by the Legislature to override.

Small homes all over the city are being razed to make way for larger houses out of scale with neighboring homes. Likewise, vacant lots, side lots and rear lots, once viewed as difficult or more valuable as yard and garden space, are sprouting new homes, most of which are also large for their sites and the neighborhood.

Multi-acre sites long assumed to be secure as privately owned open space, are now on the market or under construction. Developments planned or underway at Newton-Andover Theological School, Woodland and Riverside MBTA stations, behind the Jenny gas station in Thompsonville along with projects recently completed on open space at Lasell College and the Newton campus of Boston College remind us of how vulnerable these large spaces are in this economy and how ill-equipped the city is to compete with developers in efforts to preserve these valuable parcels.

Elsewhere in this issue, you will find a list of six goals proposed by the Newton Conservators board to guide our activity over the next couple of years. Your comments are needed as we work to meet the challenges we face as a community. Despite the pressing nature of those challenges, it's important that we take time periodically to recognize what we as a community have accomplished—and it is an enviable record, indeed, that we recognize on Earth Day/Arbor Day 2000.

Setting Goals: We'd Like Your Input

by Doug Dickson

The Newton Conservators board has, narrowed a long list of potential goals to a half dozen that we believe represent critical needs and/or opportunities over the next two years. In setting these goals, the board hopes to provide focus for our work together within the broad context of our mission (see statement of mission elsewhere in this newsletter).

Now, we are looking to you for additional input. Do these represent the areas of greatest opportunity to advance the mission of the Conservators? Are they likely to produce results in terms of preservation of open space and intelligent use of public and private land in the city? Will they yield a better environment and improved appreciation of the natural resources available in Newton?

Let us know your thoughts and ideas. Talk with a board member, write a letter or send an e-mail to ddickson@mediaone.net.

2000-2001 GOALS, as proposed by the Newton Conservators' Board of Directors:

1. Create a land bank for acquisition, preservation and maintenance of public open space through passage by the State Legislature and local implementation of the Community Preservation Act.
2. Strengthen the process (including broad community input) and content (taking into account current conditions and opportunities) of the year 2000 Open Space Plan revision.
3. Create and publish an easy-to-use parks and public open space report card to focus attention on maintenance and improvement priorities.
4. Develop a set of options and contingency plans for preserving selected parcels of private open space so the city is prepared well in advance of unforeseen events that could threaten them.
5. Expand education programs to improve awareness, use and appreciation of public open spaces through various media, including revised maps, cable programs, and news articles.
6. Continue an active program of support, sponsorship and advocacy for open space, waterway and land use initiatives throughout our community and region on an as-needed basis.

**Mass. Secretary of Environmental Affairs
to Speak at Annual Dinner
Tuesday May 23, 2000**

by Mike Clarke

Bob Durand, Massachusetts Secretary of Environmental Affairs, will be the speaker at the Newton Conservators Annual Dinner meeting on Tuesday, May 23.



Durand has long been an advocate of the Community Preservation Act to provide resources to communities struggling to preserve open spaces and historic properties that are threatened by development. This bill is at a critical juncture having

passed both houses of the legislature and has advanced to the Joint Conference Committee. As noted by Jim Broderick in an earlier Newsletter "...according to the office of Rep. Ruth Balser, the Conference Committee's first meeting on February 2 meeting was contention-free but a subsequent meeting was not scheduled." Passage of the Community Preservation Act has been a major objective of the Newton Conservators and has received the support of Newton's Parks and Recreation and Conservation Commissions, Historical Commission, Housing Committee, Board of Alderman and Executive Branch.

The Community Preservation Act would provide every city and town in Massachusetts with an opportunity to raise funds to purchase land for open space, to preserve and maintain historic structures and landscapes, and to provide affordable housing -- without over-riding the present 2 1/2 restriction on taxes. A local Community Preservation Fund would be used to support specific preservation projects approved by the Board of Aldermen and to build escrow accounts for open space, historic sites and community housing. When immediate or large outlays might be required, bonds could be issued against these accounts, as for instance when a golf course or college site came on

the market. In addition, any specific project could be partially supported by grants from a state fund that would be established by the Act.

Durand was appointed Secretary of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs by Governor Paul Cellucci at the end of 1998. In addition to advancing the Governor's goal of protecting 200,000 acres of open space by the year 2010, Secretary Durand has set forth an aggressive agenda for the Commonwealth's environmental agencies. Secretary Durand's major policy initiatives include the Community Preservation Act, Pollution Prevention, Biodiversity, Environmental Education, and the Watershed Initiative. On the national level, Secretary Durand is active in the Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) and serves as the State Chairman for the Teaming with Wildlife Coalition, a broad-based group working to secure funding for state conservation, and related education and recreation.

During his fifteen-year career in the Massachusetts legislature, had been known as a leading advocate for environmental issues. He served as Chairman of the Natural Resources Committee and later as the Majority Whip in the Senate. In 1996, Durand authored and successfully gained passage of the first in the nation Rivers Protection Act, protecting river quality, riparian ecology, the health of watersheds, and limiting development along riverways. He sponsored key laws such as the Open Space Bond Bill of 1996, the state's major open space funding vehicle, and the Brownfields Act of 1998, which focuses on expediting the redevelopment and remediation of contaminated industrial and commercial sites. Throughout his tenure in the legislature, Durand promoted the Community Preservation Act, in an effort to provide resources to communities struggling to preserve open spaces and historic properties threatened by development. This bill is currently pending before the legislature and is expected to pass this session.

Secretary Durand has received the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Environmental League of Massachusetts. He was recognized as Legislator of the Year by the Massachusetts Audubon Society, the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions, as well as several state watershed coalitions. He has also received the Governor's

Award for the Open Space Protection and the Outstanding Public Policy Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Raised in Hudson, Bob Durand is a graduate of Hudson Catholic High School and Boston College ('75). He currently resides in Marlborough with his wife Brenda, and three sons Jake, Caleb and Andrew.

Annual Dinner!

Tuesday, May 23, 2000

6:15 PM, Noyes Hall,

Andover Newton Theological Seminary

Speaker: Robert Durand

Mass. Secretary of Environmental Affairs

***Environmentalist of the Year Award to
Marty Sender***

Massachusetts Biodiversity Days

by Ted Kuklinski

<http://www.newtonconservators.org/biodiversity.htm>

Bob Durand, Secretary of Environmental Affairs, is urging all children, their families and amateur naturalists to save the date of Friday, June 9, Saturday, June 10, and Sunday, June 11, for the Commonwealth's first Biodiversity Days.

Co-sponsors of the event include: the Newton Conservators, the Massachusetts Audubon Society, the Massachusetts Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, and the Harvard Museum of Natural History. Their cooperative mission is to increase the number of children and adults who are focused on the component species of wild neighbors that share our pristine and altered habitats

In Newton, we have scheduled a walk on Saturday, June 10 as part of the Newton Conservators Spring Walk series at Dolan Pond. So if you know, or would like to know, bugs, birds, plants, trees, fish, frogs, or animals, please come out and help with this exciting event. Please join us on one of the upcoming walks. Contact Ted Kuklinski, DolanPond@aol.com or (617) 969-6222, Newton Biodiversity Days.

Marty Sender to Receive Environmentalist of the Year Award

by Peter Kastner



The Board of the Newton Conservators will present its Environmentalist of the Year Award to Marty Sender at its open annual meeting to be held on May 23, 2000 for his outstanding contribution to improving the environment.

In making this award the Board recognized his many environmental activities including: In 1991 Marty was one of the founders of Save the Cove, which was concerned with a rapid outbreak of non-native aquatic vegetation in the Lakes District of the Charles River. He was instrumental in helping the group lead a very successful cleanup program in the Charles funded by over \$500,000 in state funds. He has served on the MDC's Citizen Advisory Committee for the Charles River Pathway project, Newton's Joint Advisory Planning Group on the future of the Rumford Avenue Incinerator and on the Flowed Meadow Planning Group. He is now vice President of the Charles River Watershed Association, whose Board he has served on since 1992, and Vice President of the Auburndale Community Association. The award will also recognize the service that he has provided to the Newton Conservators by serving on its Board of Directors.

Marty Sender is the president and principal of Sender Communications, a communications and media relations consulting firm based in Newton and Boston. Sender Communications provides communications training and media relations, crisis management and presentation consulting. Before founding Sender Communications, Marty was an award-winning local and network television reporter, program host and producer for 22 years. During this time he covered political beats for WHDH-TV and worked 5 years with CBS News as a field producer and reporter. Prior to his work for CBS News, he was the three-time Emmy-award winning host of "Evening Magazine," on WBZ-TV.

Trees as Sound Barriers along Mass Pike

by Michael J. Clarke

Noise from the Mass Pike has been bothering homeowners in Newtonville, who feel it negatively impacts their quality of life. After the Newtonville Association for Noise Abatement (NANA) petitioned the Turnpike Authority for sound barriers similar to that constructed in Newton Corner, a study was conducted during the Dukakis administration and a sound barrier was promised. However, despite repeated entreaties to the new administration, sound barriers were no longer deemed cost effective or important and Chairman Kerasiotes refused to construct new sound barriers.

Immediately after her election, Rep. Ruth Balsler was contacted by NANA and a meeting was arranged in Mayor Cohen's office. NANA then updated the Mayor, Rep. Khan, Rep. Ruth Balsler, and Sen. Cynthia Creem on the history of the issue. This group then tackled the problem with Representatives Balsler and Khan working in tandem to help their constituents in Newtonville and West Newton, respectively, who suffered from traffic noise problems.

Last spring, Rep. Balsler met with representatives of the Turnpike Authority, who explained that the Turnpike would not construct a concrete sound barrier. However, in response to the problems in Newton, they agreed to plant trees with sound absorbing characteristics, and to re-pave the highway with sound absorbing material. At a meeting in Newton City Hall this past summer, a plan was unveiled the plan to plant 1000 trees on property owned by the Turnpike Authority in Newton from Route 128 to Newtonville. The planting has begun, and on Friday April 28 at 2:30 (on Arbor Day), Mayor Cohen will hold a ceremonial ribbon cutting to announce the planting as an environmentally friendly way of abating turnpike noise and beautifying the city.

Volunteers Improve Charles River Path

by Mike Clarke

As part of the Newton 2000 effort to make the Garden City more scenic, on April 9, MDC Ranger Kevin Hollenbeck led approximately as 150 volunteers to improve the southernmost section of the Charles River Pathway in Newton. Some years ago the Conservators and other volunteers cleared the this section of the Charles River Pathway, which runs along the river parallel to the river between Nahanton St. and the Oak Hill Woods behind the Solomon Schecter School at the end of Wells Ave.



Volunteers from Newton North Improve Trail

This path is particularly beautiful this time of year, when numbers of many different types of wildflowers bloom along the wetland border. The path has now been widened sufficiently for the MDC to subsequently maintain it by mowing. Further improvements include, a bridge to be built across Country Club Brook to make the path continuous and side path will out to a delightful drumlin overlooking the river.

Canoe Trip on the Charles

By Bill and Dottie Hagar

Six canoes and kayaks set out on Saturday morning, April 8, 2000 to paddle to Powell's Island from Nahanton Park. The objective was leisurely trip to observe the wonders of this undisturbed part of the river almost bordering on wilderness, but the weather turned it into an exciting adventure. The beautiful morning at the outset was also the beginning of a storm front with increased winds, which gave the canoeists the chance to test their skills. The upstream trip moved along Cutler Park on the right side of the river, while on the left bank one could glimpse the new section of the Charles River Pathway.

Further on, on the left side the group encountered the now capped West Roxbury Dump, which had improved with grass replacing the ugly plastic covering of last year. Soon it will be a new Boston Park!

Lunching on Powell's Island, the tour met a group from the Southeastern Section of the Appalachian Club, who had paddled down from Needham via the Long Ditch. The island stop was their rest point before continuing to Hemlock Gorge, where they had left their cars. Little did they know about the wind shifts later in the day!

During the interlude, the Newton Conservator group hiked around the island observing the flora and fauna. Upon their return, they faced the fierce winds once again using the meanders of the Charles as a shield to avoid the blustery winds.



The picture shows Linda, Dottie, Howard, Susan, Bill and Tom. In the background is a group

from the Southeaster Section of the AMC heading towards Hemlock Gorge. (Don't ask us how they got by the dam!)

Earth Rising:

American Environmentalism in the 21st Century

By Philip Shabecoff, Island Press, Washington, DC and
Covelo, CA, 224 pp., \$24.95

Book Review by Diana Muir

In this comprehensive overview of the state of the environmental movement, Philip Shabecoff reminds us that being right is not enough. If the planetary ecosystem is to continue to function, it is necessary for environmental activists to be effective. There are, of course, many ways to be effective: converting one's own household to solar power, donating funds or acreage to a land trust, and lobbying to pass laws fostering energy-efficient transportation options are all steps in the right direction. Shabecoff, however, does not let us off so easily. An astute observer of the political scene, he is aware that all of the activity of all of the environmental activists in America have fallen and will continue to fall far short of what would be sufficient to arrest such looming disasters as global warming. If we are to meet threats to the health of the planetary ecosystem effectively, we must recognize three hard truths.

First, Shabecoff posits the simple truth that the League of Conservation Voters, the Environmental League of Massachusetts, and similar groups may be right, but they will never wield a fraction of the financial clout of Exxon and DuPont. Congress, he reminds us, is for sale to the highest bidder. So is the Massachusetts General Court. Campaign finance reform is the planet's only hope. Without it, environmental advocates, however important the legislation they propose, will always be outbid by businesses that make profits by exploiting resources in ecosystem-destroying ways.

Second, Shabecoff trenchantly explains that the illusion of non-partisan activism, widespread among conservationists, is absurd. There was a time when Republican congressmen devised far-sighted environmental bills and Republican Presidents signed them, but that time is long past. The Republican congressional delegation scores an average of 20 out of a possible 100 when rated by the League of Conservation Voters. The Democratic delegation scores 80. With such disparity, Shabecoff tells us that environmentalists must recognize the fact that the environment is a

partisan issue; and that the Republican Party has declared war on the planet.

The third home truth that Shabecoff brings to his reader's attention is that international trade is an environmental issue. The finest clean water regulations in the world are of little use if they merely succeed in exporting American jobs to foreign nations. Tanning, for example, was a major American industry before the passage of the clean water act. Virtually no tanning is done in this country today. Technology exists to run non-polluting tanneries, but it is much cheaper to tan leather in countries like Mexico that do not enforce their environmental regulations. The nasty chemicals that flow from unregulated tanneries still end up in the Gulf of Mexico where Americans fish; it is only the jobs that have all gone south of the border.

Similarly, it will avail little to shift our national electric grid to renewable sources if China continues to electrify by burning coal. Only if we make environmental issues an international priority will there be hope.

It is not easy to be optimistic after reading Phil Shabecoff's clear-eyed look at American Environmentalism in the 21st Century, but if we pay heed to some of his recommendations, it may be possible.

Diana Muir is the author of Reflections in Bullough's Pond, scheduled for release in May 2000. Her book was reviewed by Phil Shabecoff in the Newton Conservators February newsletter. She lives with her family on Bullough's Pond in Newton.

Phil Shabecoff is also a Newton resident. He was for many years environmental reporter for the New York Times. More recently, he founded and published an environmental news service called Greenwire. Earth Rising is his third book chronicling the history and future of the environmental movement in the US and around the world. He serves as a member of the Newton Urban Tree Commission and planted the seed that grew into Newton's new Tree Preservation Ordinance.



Canada Geese Taking Flight on Charles
Conservators' April Canoe Trip - Bill Hagar

The Newton: Conservators Newsletter appears three or four times a year. Editor: Michael Clarke. Production: Bonnie Carter, 969-0686. We wish to thank the contributors to this edition of the **Newsletter**: Mike Clarke, Doug Dickson, Bill Hagar, Diana Muir, Judy Hepburn and Ted Kuklinski. We also thank Boston College, for the use of its word-processing equipment.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please renew your membership for 2000.

New Member

Renewal

Name _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Individual member	\$20
Family membership	\$25
Sustaining member	\$35
Donor	\$50
Patron	\$100
Additional Contribution	\$_____
Total	\$_____

Please make check payable to: **Newton Conservators, Inc.**

Mail to:

Newton Conservators

P.O. Box 590011

Newton Centre, MA 02459

Newton Conservators' Spring Walks 2000

Sunday, May 14, 8:00 AM

Mother's Day Bird Walk at Nahanton Park

The mix of woodlands, wetlands and meadows along the Charles River migration route make Nahanton a wonderful place for spring birding. Enter the park at the Nahanton St. entrance next to the river and meet at the Nature Center. Parking is available inside the park. Trip leader is Paula Chasan (965-2752), an experienced birder from Friends of Nahanton Park. Bring binoculars if you have them.

Saturday, May 20, 10AM-1 PM

Ordway Park Clean-up

New spring bulbs that were planted last year filled this small park with color in March and April. Help us tackle the understory and clean-up from winter's toll. Ordway Park, gifted to the Conservators by Miss Priscilla Ordway, is at the corner of Grant and Everett Streets in Newton Center. Call Jim Broderick (332-3465), Chair of the Conservators' Ordway Park Committee for more information. If you have them, bring gloves and small gardening tools.

Sunday, June 4, 2:00 PM

Webster Conservation Area

Walk part of this 113-acre reserve, including Houghton Garden, Hemlock Grove, and Deer Park. The area has woods, wetlands and impressive rock outcroppings. Meet at Chestnut Hill parking lot off Hammond Pond at the pond's edge near Hemlock Grove. Trip leader is Richard Primack (332-1684), Botany Professor at Boston University and a long time Newton resident.

Saturday, June 10, 9:00 AM

Biodiversity Day Walk —Dolan Pond Conservation Area, West Newton

Come join us at Dolan Pond Conservation Area as part of Massachusetts' first Annual Biodiversity Days. On this walk, we hope to see or hear at least 100 species of bugs, birds, plants, trees, fish, frogs, or animals. We especially invite those well experienced in identifying such living things, as well as those who are novices (including our younger naturalists to be). What a great opportunity to get out and learn something about the natural world! We will be working from a checklist of visible (one mm in size - the size of a period, or greater) flora and fauna of Massachusetts. If you have them, please bring along your binoculars, magnifying glasses, bug box viewers, and field guides to birds, trees, plants, creepy crawlies, or whatever others you have.

The approximately 8 acre Dolan Pond area provides a mosaic of environmental conditions. It is dominated by red maple swamp, but the interspersed open water, scrub/shrub thickets and wet meadow/vegetated swales provides for a rich wildlife habitat and encourages biological diversity. We will meet at the entrance on the side street called Webster Park. This street is off Webster Street which runs parallel to the north side of the Mass Pike between West Newton and Auburndale. If it is pouring rain, we will meet on Sunday, June 11 at the same time instead.

Depending on how many citizen naturalists are willing to help, additional walks may be scheduled on this same weekend in other natural areas of Newton. Please check the Newton Biodiversity web page at <http://www.newtonconservators.org/biodiversity> for the latest information on possible additional events for Biodiversity Days. Please contact Ted Kuklinski (617-969-6222) or send email to DolanPond@aol.com if you have questions or you would like to help as a naturalist leader with this or other Biodiversity walks on this weekend.

Sunday, June 18, 2:00 PM

Hemlock Gorge Reservation, Newton Upper Falls

An old stone factory, 1800 textile mill, prominent waterfalls and a handsome pedestrian bridge noted for its echo effects reveal Hemlock Gorge's prominent role in Newton's early development. Stroll the hemlock-studded banks of the Charles and explore Devil's Den with Vaunita Schnell (969-3620). Meet at the reservation parking lot on Ellis St., just south of Route 9.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Bob Durand Speaks at Annual Dinner May 23
- BioDiversity Days
- Conservators' Goals for 2000
- Trees Planted as Sound Barriers
- Volunteers Improve Charles River Pathway
- Phil Shabecoff's Earth Rising

NEWTON CONSERVATORS, INC.
P.O. Box 590011
Newton Centre, MA 02459

Non-Profit Organ.
U.S. Postage Paid
Newton, MA 02459
Permit No. 55629

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED