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## Building Blue Cities® in the Charles River Watershed

You may have noticed a recent increase in algae, invasive water chestnuts, and other aquatic plants in parts of the Charles River near your home. Do you wonder what causes this increase in plants that restrict boaters and deprive fish and other aquatic species of oxygen?

While many factors contribute to this problem in our water bodies, one major cause is stormwater runoff, the water that flows into the river after a rainstorm, carrying too much phosphorus. As you know if you garden, phosphorus is a nutrient necessary for plant growth. Excessive amounts of phosphorus in the Charles River allow invasive species including water chestnuts and algae to grow rapidly and to take over the river.

At Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA) we, like you, are concerned about excessive levels of nutrients leading to algal blooms and the overgrowth of water chestnuts in the Charles River. One approach to address the issue of invasive species is to try to pull them out before they can spread. CRWA works with many volunteers and partners to try to control the spread of invasive water chestnuts and other aquatic weeds through hand and mechanical harvesting. However, to really address the source of the problem, we must limit the amount of phosphorus entering the Charles River and other water bodies through stormwater.

In our typical cities and towns, the built environment works very differently from the natural environment when it comes to stormwater. Traditional “grey” infrastructure



Peabody Square rain garden

systems use pipes under streets and parking lots to quickly funnel polluted runoff to the nearest river or lake. By contrast, in natural environments, the majority of the rainwater gets absorbed into the ground after a rainstorm. This allows the water to be cleaned as it filters through vegetation and soil before recharging the groundwater system and eventually

entering the river. At CRWA, we have developed an approach called Blue Cities® that aims to restore natural hydrologic function to the built environment through the use of “green” infrastructure. Green infrastructure systems use vegetation and soils to capture and treat stormwater before allowing the water to return to the ground or into a nearby river or lake.

Examples of green infrastructure techniques include rain gardens, which collect rainwater in shallow depressions and use soil and vegetation to filter it into the ground; permeable pavement and pavers, which allow the water to filter through them; and tree pits, which are specifically designed so that they can capture, store and treat the stormwater running off from streets and parking lots. Not only do these features help slow down and treat stormwater, but they also provide an opportunity for greening neighborhoods by incorporating trees and plantings into paved public areas such as city streets and squares.

One good example of a successful urban Blue Cities® project is Peabody Square in Dorchester. CRWA worked with the City of Boston and their consultant Nitsch

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### ***Building Blue Cities continued from page 1:***

Engineering to incorporate a number of green infrastructure techniques, including a rain garden, permeable pavement and a planted recharge trench into the reconstruction of Peabody Square in Boston. The foreground of the photo on page 1 shows the rain garden, which collects and treats stormwater from the adjoining street and lawn area.

Another, more suburban example of a Blue Cities Project was undertaken by CRWA in a larger sub-watershed in the Town of Franklin. As part of this project, CRWA worked with the Town of Franklin to identify sites where green infrastructure techniques could be incorporated to help manage stormwater, to recharge the groundwater, and to help the town achieve the phosphorus reductions determined necessary by the Upper/Middle Charles River Nutrient Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) requirement. This project demonstrates the different scales on which we use the Blue Cities® approach. We started by looking at the “sub-watershed,” the area of land that drains into Spruce Pond Brook, a tributary of Mine Brook that in turn flows into the Charles River. This sub-watershed is about one square mile in area and is home to approximately four thousand people. Planning at this level provided us an opportunity to think about how the land, water, and infrastructure work together as a whole. Because some sites have more opportunities for green infrastructure than others, looking at an entire sub-watershed allowed us to identify the sites that together will reduce the most phosphorus.

Through undertaking the analysis at the sub-watershed scale, CRWA was able to propose a variety of green infrastructure retrofit projects at the site scale for the town to undertake on publically owned land. The town has since successfully implemented two projects: one at an elementary school and

the other at a parking lot adjoining a ball field. Both of these locations are public areas, so not only do people benefit from improved water quality and increased groundwater levels, but the sites serve as nice demonstration projects for adjoining towns in the watershed that are required to comply with the TMDL requirements as well.

As we work with cities and towns in our watershed to address the algal blooms and curb the proliferation of invasive species in the Charles River, we need to look at every infrastructure development or redevelopment project as an opportunity to introduce green infrastructure techniques. As municipalities across the watershed are being required to comply with the Upper/Middle and Lower Charles River TMDLs, CRWA is also simultaneously working with the City of Newton to promote green infrastructure in both public and private redevelopment projects. Not only will this result in improved water quality in our river, but it will also lead to “greener” cities and towns that are more resilient to the impacts of climate change. For more information about Blue Cities® please visit [www.crwa.org/blue.html](http://www.crwa.org/blue.html) or contact Pallavi Mande, Director of Blue Cities® at CRWA.

✉ Pallavi Mande, CWRA

*CRWA's mission is to use science, advocacy and the law to protect, preserve and enhance the Charles River and its watershed. For more information about our work visit [www.charlesriver.org](http://www.charlesriver.org)*

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## **President's Message**



Jane Sender and Douglas Tallamy, Professor of Entomology & Wildlife Ecology at University of Delaware

Our Annual Meeting in May was truly memorable. The keynote speaker, Professor Douglas Tallamy, had a very important message, which affected many in the audience. His message was this: “Because we humans have disrupted natural ecosystems in so many ways and in so many places, the future of our nation’s biodiversity is dim unless we start to share our landscapes with the plants and animals that evolved there.” He asks us to take a look at our own yards and gardens and ask ourselves what the connection is

## **Volunteers Needed!**

### **Charles River Watershed Association**

Winner of the Thiess International Riverprize

The 2012 water chestnut removal season is underway! So far, many individuals and groups have signed up to help remove these plants, but we are still looking for more volunteers! Please help spread the word to anyone you know, and help us take care of our river by removing these harmful, invasive plants. Remember, no experience is necessary and we will provide you with all of the necessary training and equipment!

### **Public volunteer dates are scheduled for:**

Sunday, July 1 from 12pm – 4pm

Saturday, July 14th from 12pm – 4pm

Thursday, July 19th from 5pm – 7:30pm

Saturday, July 28th from 10am – 1pm



*President's Message continued from page 2:*

between our own plants and the larger ecosystem. He tells us that the trees and plants that host our native caterpillars are most important because they are the most valuable food source for species of concern, like migratory birds. He has provided a list of plants and their relative value for hosting caterpillars to help us make choices—see <http://udel.edu/~dtallamy/host/index.html>.

I had been generally aware of the importance of native plants before Professor Tallamy's talk, but I, like many in the audience, wasn't fully aware of why native plants are so important. Not only are the hostas we love so much not supporting the caterpillars and insects our birds need, but other plants we use widely in our Newton gardens, like Japanese Spirea, do the additional damage of taking over and outcompeting native plants. These non-native plants are popular because they tend to look good throughout the growing season, unlike many natives, which often bloom in the spring leaving holes in the garden in the middle of summer. The lesson I took away was not to judge your garden by how good it always looks but by the extent to which it supports the surrounding natural environment. And if you want it to always look good, with a little more thought and planning, you can find native plants that have appeal all summer long.

After the speech I nearly did myself in taking out some particularly invasive non native plants and replanting natives. My hat goes off to Professor Tallamy—it's not easy to get people to change their ways. I urge all our members to give thought to these issues and to try to educate others, including local landscapers, who often suggest showy non natives they believe will make their customers happy. For more information about plants that provide good food for birds and insects, read Beth Shroeder's article in this edition of our newsletter.

At the meeting we also had fun honoring our awardees, the Charles River Watershed Association for their 46 years of successful work making the Charles the cleanest urban river in the nation; State Representative Kay Khan and The Bicycle Pedestrian Task Force for their restoration of the Newton Lower Falls bridge, and former President Eric Reenstierna for his years of work on the Conservators' board. We in Newton have benefitted enormously from these efforts, and were very happy to be able to express our gratitude.

On a slightly less upbeat note, it is regrettable that the Newton Parks and Recreation Commission decided at its May meeting to allow the West Newton Little League to build a permanent building for a concession stand, toilet and storage area at Lyons Field in Auburndale Park. The City will own the building. Once again the City is allowing a permanent structure in a park that has no general park purpose and will be the City's ultimate responsibility to maintain. The City owns at least two other buildings in other parks—Nahanton Park and Kennard Park—one used



Top: Charles Johnson Maynard Award honorees Kay Khan, George Kirby and Sean Roche; Bottom: Jane Sender and Directors' Award honoree Eric Reenstierna.

by the building department, the other used by a school related nonprofit entity, which have no connection to those parks. This misuse brings City trucks and unnecessary trash into Nahanton Park and extra cars and inappropriate signage into Kennard Park. Although the City has agreed to try to find park-related uses for these buildings, that is a difficult thing to do. Moreover, the City cannot afford to maintain these buildings, and they are in horrible disrepair. Now the Parks & Recreation Commission is allowing the City to own yet another permanent structure that has no general park purpose and that ultimately it will likely be unable to maintain properly. We urged the Commission not to do this, and they chose to ignore our concerns entirely. Kids can play Little League without permanent buildings. This was a regrettable, short sighted decision.

I hope you all have a lovely summer, and we hope to see you at some of our events and activities.

*Jane Sender, President*

## Message from the Editor

Welcome to the Summer 2012 newsletter of the Newton Conservators, which is filled with wonderfully informative and useful articles.

So many of the worthwhile projects covered in this issue have been accomplished through small, sometimes tedious, steps taken year after year. The CWRA is accomplishing its goals of greener cities throughout our region one rain garden at a time. By all of us working together to make our individual plots hospitable to native insects and birds—one native plant at a time—we can join together to create a whole city that will sustain the natural life we want to enjoy and pass on to our children.

This year, thanks to the work of Lisle Baker, Ruthanne Fuller, and Mayor Setti Warren, there will be almost twice as much money to maintain the city's conservation lands next year. With invasive plants taking over more of the land and signs and paths yet to be installed, however, there is need for still more money in additional years; we will have to advocate for those additional steps in the future.

There is so much work for the Conservators to do. Please find the project that most appeals to you and join other members in taking the steps to make it a success.

✂ Beth Wilkinson, Editor

## More Funding for Maintenance of City-Owned Conservation Land

The City of Newton has seventeen "Conservation Commission Properties" that total approximately 440 acres. Our three largest are the 100-acre Webster Conservation Area next to Hammond Pond, the Charles River Pathway at Wells Avenue (30 acres) and the Saw Mill Brook Conservation area (20 acres).

Looking at Fiscal Years 2008 to 2012, the City of Newton invested only \$25,000 to \$42,300 each year in maintenance. The original budget proposed by the Mayor to the Board of Alderman for FY2013 for the Conservation Land Maintenance Account came to \$25,000.

Alderman Lisle Baker noted this low amount of funding and introduced a budget resolution from the Board of Aldermen to the Mayor requesting an increase of \$25,000 to the Conservation Fund. The Mayor responded quickly and positively: Mayor Warren allocated an additional \$27,048 for conservation land maintenance from FEMA storm reimbursements. Funding for FY2013 will now be \$52,048. (This is a one-time increase in funding.)

✂ Alderman Ruthanne Fuller

## Native Communities

As Douglas Tallamy explained at this year's annual meeting, our house lots are plant communities that can support wildlife. Some of our properties do a better job than others. It depends on which trees, shrubs and smaller plants exist on your land. Before the City of Newton developed, the original habitat evolved with a rich diversity of plant and animal life. Each native plant and animal species had interdependency with the others.



Milkweed ✂ All photos in this article are by Beth Schroeder.

As people brought in plants from other regions, the diversity of native plants on our properties diminished. Many newly introduced plants pushed out our original native plants. Others were preferred by homeowners for aesthetic reasons. Native insects, birds and mammals depend on our native plants as a food source. Some animals can survive by eating non-native plants and berries, but others cannot. The ability for our land to support a wide range of wild creatures is threatened.

Insects are an integral part of the food chain. Butterflies are one type of insect we would especially like to attract to our gardens. If the beneficial plants are not there, the butterflies will also be missing.

We are taught in school that monarch butterflies lay their eggs on milkweed plants and their caterpillars eat the milkweed's leaves and flowers. But did you know that the eastern and western pine elfin butterflies lay their eggs on the eastern white pines' new needles and their caterpillars hatch to eat those same needles? The mourning cloak butterfly is the first butterfly you see each spring in March: It feeds on poplar, cottonwood, willow, elm, speckled alder and hackberry leaves.



### *Native Communities continued from page 4:*

Elm and nettle leaves provide food for the eastern comma caterpillar. Speckled alder leaves support the larvae of eastern tiger swallowtail, white admiral and green comma butterflies. Eastern tiger and spicebush swallowtail caterpillars feed on cucumber magnolia leaves. Several types of caterpillars, including the spring azure, feed on the leaves of the Florida dogwood. Striped hairstreak butterfly larvae feed on oak, hornbeam and hawthorn leaves.

In early spring, queen bumble bees rely on the pollen of trout lilies to feed emerging worker bees (*Source: Newton Conservators' Almanac, Sue Avery*). Moths, butterflies and bees pollinate wild columbine (*Source: NCA, Sue Avery*), an attractor of the ruby throated hummingbird. Bumblebees pollinate mountain laurels, and ants spread plants for us when they carry seeds into their nests, where they germinate.

We all love to see birds and butterflies on our property, but there is another group we may not think about, the mammals that live in our communities. Did you know that the whirled seeds of the eastern white pine, for example, are eaten not just by birds but also by mammals such as squirrels, chipmunks and mice? Squirrels and chipmunks also eat the two-winged samara seeds from maple trees in the spring and shadbush berries as they ripen in June.

Many small mammals, including the white-footed mouse, chipmunk, cottontail rabbit, skunk and fox eat blueberries. Small mammals also eat the bright red drupes of the American highbush cranberry and watch for American hazelnuts to ripen. Raccoons and red foxes eat partridgeberries.

American beechnuts provide food for chipmunks, squirrels and deer. Arrowwood viburnum berries are eaten by chipmunks and foxes. Virginia creeper berries ripen in late summer and are a winter food for chipmunks and skunks.

Oaks are among the biggest providers of food for wild mammals. These trees usually produce an acorn crop every two to five years. Oaks provide an abundance of acorns in mast years, when all varieties of oaks produce acorns. Chipmunk and squirrel populations spike during a mast year. Last year, the acorn crop was particularly poor, and the populations of squirrels, mice, and chipmunks are expected to drop.



Left: trout lily; Right: Arrowwood viburnum



Top: cucumber magnolia; Bottom: Florida dogwood

Large raptors continue nature's food chain by eating small mammals and birds. Red-tailed hawks swoop down after small mammals in our neighborhoods. Last week I saw a hawk dive into a newly made squirrel nest in the white oak along our property border. He missed the squirrel, and a blue jay chased him away.

Smaller birds eat insects and the seeds and berries of our native shrubs and deciduous trees. Did you know that conifers also provide food for birds? Many birds eat Eastern white pine, pitch pine and red pine seeds. Black-capped chickadees like the seeds from eastern hemlock cones. The pine siskin prefers the seeds of the eastern arborvitae. The evening grosbeak, purple finch, and pine grosbeak eat the seeds of the balsam fir. Eastern red cedar's berry-like cones are eaten by the cedar waxwing, northern mockingbird, brown thrasher and gray catbird.

If you would like to know more about what seeds and berries birds enjoy, you may want to read the Newton Conservators Almanac (NCA), which lists native trees, shrubs and wildflowers found in Newton. It is not necessary to have a garden that excludes all non-native plants, but the more native plants you have on your property, the more native insects, mammals and birds you will see.

When you remove invasive plants such as barberry and burning bush, replace them with native plants. You will get three seasons of beauty from them, and you will be welcoming our native wildlife on to your property.

➤ Beth Schroeder – [bsw1@comcast.net](mailto:bsw1@comcast.net)

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## Ferns In Newton

Ferns are perennial, and almost all of them have emerged for the summer at this point. In inventorying most of the open space in Newton, I and others in the Land Management Committee of the Newton Conservators found 28 pteridophyte (nonflowering, spore-producing) taxa: 21 fern species, 3 fern hybrids, 3 club-moss species, and 1 horsetail. (For comparison, there are 53 species of ferns native to Massachusetts.)

Ferns and related groups are vascular plants, meaning that they have a circulatory system. They invented it, and it allows them and the flowering plants that evolved from them to get taller than the mosses, which grow to about four inches. In fact some of our ferns can grow to about seven feet. Ferns like mosses propagate by spores, tiny bits of genetic material that don't carry the food supply that seeds do. Ferns emerge as fiddleheads, uncurling spirals that keep the growth tip protected. (Only one species of fern, Ostrich fern, is legal for human consumption in North America. These are the "fiddleheads" in the produce department in the spring.)

The three best features to use in deciding which fern you are looking at are the degree of cutting, the growth form, and the traits of the stipes, or supporting stalks.

Most of our ferns are twice-cut; a few like Christmas fern and Polypody are once-cut; the laciest ferns are thrice-cut, or nearly so.

The rhizome of a fern plant grows underground and is equivalent to the stem and maybe branches of a spermatophyte plant. This rhizome can grow horizontally or vertically. Hayscented fern has a horizontal rhizome that

branches frequently, and so the fronds grow up individually with no obvious spatial relationship among them. Ostrich and Wood ferns grow from a vertical rhizome; not only do the fronds come up in distinct clumps, but they face each other around a circle.

Some ferns have hairs on the lower stem; some have scales; some have neither. Cinnamon and Interrupted ferns have something like lint or wool. I have photographs on my website of all of the native ferns of New England. You could send me a photograph of a fern you would like me to identify ([don@nefern.info](mailto:don@nefern.info)). You also can find more details in my descriptions in the Newton Conservators Almanac or on the section on evolution and identification on my website: [nefern.info/layouts/introduction\\_to\\_ferns.htm](http://nefern.info/layouts/introduction_to_ferns.htm).

Some of our native ferns will do well in a home garden. I have at least 40 kinds in my small city yard in Allston, including about  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the Massachusetts natives. Most tolerate moderate shade but would want to be watered if there were no rain for a week. Some require higher pH from cement or bricks or added lime. Mine vary in height from a few inches to five feet. I grow some exotic, e.g. Asian species, but I find better hardiness with native plants.

I have led several fern walks for the Newton Conservators, and may again sometime. We have found interesting diversity in Cold Spring Park, in Nahanton Park and the Blue Heron Trail to its south, in Flowed Meadow, and in the Webster Conservation Area on both sides of Hammond Pond Parkway. Kennard, Edmands, Saw Mill Brook, and other relatively wild areas also have numerous ferns. I'm sure they would like you to visit.

*Don Lubin*



thrice-cut



twice-cut



once-cut

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## IDEAS & OPINIONS

### Youth & the Environment

It is after a wild run through Auburndale Park along where the Charles River almost looks like a still pond filled with blooming lily pads that I write this article. I feel renewed, replenished, and healed. Why is it I go there for this feeling? I ask myself this as a 26-year-old Newton citizen recently voted onto the Newton Conservators Board of

Directors with a relentless desire to better our community and protect the conservation lands left in the city.

Within my generation, however, there is a mentality of "Someone else is taking care of the environment," a large disconnect between the environmental community and youth. Sure, there are multiple education programs and camps but not many that encourage leadership or ownership



## Youth & the Environment continued from page 6:

of environmental problems that our earth faces while those enrolled in the programs still are young. Furthermore, these programs normally do not provide the confidence, tools, and facilitation to place educated youth in leadership positions within their community, such as sitting on advisory or director boards. Many of these inspired students and graduates feel these roles are something you do when you “get older.” For example, most of the board members of Newton Conservators are older; they have lived in Newton for many years. There are few young adults working with them to carry on their knowledge and history of Newton conservation lands. When these board members are no longer able to serve on the board, who will?

If we were to limit this disconnect that educated youth have with leadership roles, perhaps the management of our conservation lands and ecosystems could progress more seamlessly and be passed onto future generations. We certainly need all hands on deck to solve these environmental challenges; it is simply a waste of brainpower to not be using our youth now. This isn’t just a problem in Newton; it is a national and international trend.

A 2008 national report, “Examining Trends in Adolescent Environmental Attitudes, Beliefs, and Behaviors across Three Decades” (*Wrightman and Danzinger in a Network on Transitions to Adulthood Research Network Working Paper*), found that declining trends in the sense of personal responsibility for the environment, conservation behaviors, and a belief that resources are scarce were particularly noteworthy. Across all years, youth tended to assign responsibility for the environment to the government and consumers rather than accepting personal responsibility. Recent declines in environmental concerns for this nationally representative sample of youth signal the need for a renewed focus on young people’s views and calls for better environmental education and governmental leadership.

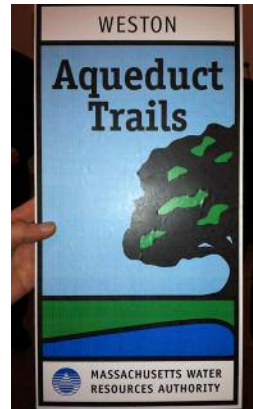
Moreover, some critics have argued that young people lack environmental consciousness. Richard Louv in his 2005 book, *Last Child in the Woods*, noted a widespread “Nature-Deficit Disorder” in young people, and Shellenberger and Nordhaus have more broadly proclaimed the “death of environmentalism.” “Nature Deficit Disorder” refers to the alleged trend that children are spending less time outdoors, resulting in a wide range of behavioral problems. Louv claims that causes for the phenomenon include parental fears, restricted access to natural areas, and the lure of the screen. Recent research has drawn a connection between the declining number of [National Park](#) visits in the United States and increasing consumption of electronic media by children.

I say this generation is more aptly prepared than any other: we just need to involve them. Encourage your children who spent hours digging for clams on the beach and who then went on to become environmental scientists to have the

confidence to get involved not just on a volunteer or collegiate level but on a community, city, state, or even federal level. Empower our young leaders to take interest in and responsibility of their local, surrounding conservation lands. All of these sectors are looking for, and welcome, youth advisors. The gap between the generation that began the US environmental movement in the 1960’s and the current generation that will inherit all of the environmental issues must be closed. We must involve the youth in their future.

✎ Jackie Daoust

## Connecting Greenways



In a city survey related to the Newton Open Space plan, one of the most highly rated responses was increasing “walking trails” in the city. Consequently, a topic under discussion in the development of the Open Space Plan is the promotion of linear pathways and their connections throughout the city. These include the Charles River Pathway, old rail lines such as the Upper Falls Greenway and the Circuit Line, and the Sudbury and Cochituate Aqueducts.

The MWRA recently declared that it will open 40 miles of the Sudbury Aqueduct that runs from Clinton to Boston to the public. While the aqueducts in Newton have long been used as undeclared walking trails, the MWRA announcement makes it possible to formalize the four miles of the Sudbury Aqueduct with appropriate signage and access improvements. The MWRA no longer needs the Sudbury aqueduct to carry water but will retain care and control in the event that the need again arises.

The MWRA said it will seek public input from communities before opening the land, allowing abutters to the trails and others to voice any objections. It may also take a few years before permits are granted for all the land. Consequently, it is up to Newton to formulate a plan for using the Sudbury Aqueduct and to negotiate the access, signage, etc. with the MWRA.

Fortunately, in anticipation of this move by the MWRA, the Board of Aldermen at the behest of the Newton Parks and Recreation Commission and with the help of Brooke Lipsitt long ago passed a resolution (#73-00, 5/1/2001) enabling a committee appointed by the Mayor to open negotiations. Now is the time for the Mayor to move on this and for the city to develop a comprehensive approach, as part of the Open Space Plan, for connecting the aqueducts, potential rail trails and the Charles River Pathway with village centers and other attractions throughout the Garden City.

✎ Michael Clarke

## Peter Kastner — Leaving Newton Conservators' Board



Peter Kastner has stepped down from the Newton Conservators board after some 30 years. He served as vice-president and was president from 1994 to 1996. For many years he also coordinated the Conservators' walk programs, chaired the nominating committee, served on the annual audit committee, and was a steady stapler and

folder of the Conservators Newsletter.

Peter first joined the Newton Conservators to successfully oppose a plan to transform Commonwealth Avenue between Route 128 and Lexington Street from its historic status as a linear park into a 4-5-lane high-speed road. Peter also was involved in protecting Norumbega Park from being absorbed into the landscaping of a proposed expansion of the Marriott Hotel.

For several years he was an open space representative on the Zoning Review Committee as well as a member of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Long Range Planning. Peter also served with Kay Morrison on a planning committee for the then "Working Boys property" to plan for a restored Nahanton Park and helped raise funds for a matching \$400,000 self-help grant to improve the park. Peter helped establish the Friends of Nahanton Park and served as its president for several years.

Peter was a long-time observer of the Parks and Recreation Commission and helped draft procedures and standards to control the construction of structures on Parks and Recreation lands. He advocated expansion of the Commission to include members with a wider range of interests, including open-space preservation. As a result, he and Mike Clarke became alternate members of the Commission. As a member, Peter advocates for more resources for open-space planning and forest management as well as more community involvement in park and playground projects. Of particular interest to Peter was getting the Parks and Recreation Commission to take an active role promoting the MDC's (now DCR's) Charles River walk. Most recently Peter was appointed as the Commission's representative on the Farm Commission.

Fortunately, Peter is continuing his membership and active association with the Newton Conservators.

— AnnaMaria Abernathy

## Rebuilding the Helen Heyn Pathway

As many Conservators remember, Helen Heyn was a founding member of the Newton Conservators in 1961 as well as of the Newton Conservation Commission in 1966. She was the mainstay of the Conservation Commission as its Secretary for approximately 25 years, much of which was unpaid, and was a key player in the Conservators' landmark 1973 survey of open space in Newton, which was the precursor to Newton's first Open Space Plan. Her intimate knowledge of all conservation and open space issues over decades made her an unparalleled resource over many decades and long after her retirement.

In the early 1990s, the Conservators helped construct the Helen Heyn Pathway within the Helen Heyn Riverway along the Charles beginning at Nahanton St. This section of the Charles River Pathway had two entrances, one opposite each parking area of Nahanton Park. However, the one by the upper parking lot fell into disuse and disappeared under fallen trees and greenbriar.

West Newton's Boy Scout Troop, led by Eagle Scout candidate Noah Carlen, rebuilt this section of the pathway over May 12-13 so that it is now clear and paved with woodchips. Troop 355 even constructed a sturdy maple-log bench for those hiking the entire length.

The original 1975 plan envisioned a bridge across College Brook so that hikers would not have to walk out to Wells Ave and then back in on the other side of the brook. Perhaps some like-minded, industrious group would consider constructing this bridge.

— Michael Clarke

## NSTAR Tree Work — Update June 2012

The *Boston Globe* report on June 6 was shocking: "NSTAR is planning to remove more than a thousand trees near major transmission lines in several communities west of Boston, as the utility works to prevent power outages that hit the region last year. Cutting had started in May and was halted earlier this week after some residents objected, saying they are worried about debris from the trees. The transmission lines provide power to tens of thousands of residents." See the full article at: [http://articles.boston.com/2012-06-06/yourtown/32082293\\_1\\_tree-removal-nstar-transmission-lines](http://articles.boston.com/2012-06-06/yourtown/32082293_1_tree-removal-nstar-transmission-lines)

Shocking as this is, we can at least be comforted that it is highly unlikely this will happen in Newton. Marc Welch, Newton's Director of Urban Forestry, has explained that



### ***NSTAR Tree Work continued from page 8:***

this tree removal work pertains to transmission lines, wires that bring power from the electric plants and substations to the wires on the streets. Transmission lines typically run through private property and/or property owned by NSTAR. Marc believes that we have few (if any) transmission wires in Newton, and so it is highly unlikely we will have to face this specific issue. The tree ordinances we have in place would also apply should NSTAR propose to remove a tree on city property or on its own property.

We do, however, continue to face the normal NSTAR line clearance work (not tree removals but tree trimming). This season's work began in May with pruning on Route 9; NSTAR contractors will work on circuits throughout the city over the summer. The agreement between NSTAR and the City, re-negotiated in 2011, requires adherence to standards outlined below and City permission for certain cuts. Since the time of that negotiated agreement, the pruning has gone pretty smoothly, with the able oversight of Marc Welch. While some work last year looked extreme and severe to Tree Commission members, upon review we saw that it was within the standards and generally appropriate to the situation. This year, NSTAR did request a loosening of the requirements, which was denied by the City, showing that vigilance is always necessary. A potential future issue is that NSTAR's merger with Northeast Utilities may change its tree trimming policies and budgets—so far there is no impact.

NSTAR standards from 2011 and Homeowner Notice with high-level instructions follow. For future reference, detailed standards can be found at [NewtonTreeConservancy.org](http://NewtonTreeConservancy.org).

### **Negotiated conditions for work on city “street” trees include:**

- No cutting central leader without permission
- No cutting lateral branches back to the trunk without permission
- No branch greater than 4 inch diameter removed unless clear and present danger to electric wires
- No more than 25% of the tree's canopy removed
- Prune back to healthy branch at least 1/3 the diameter of removed branch

### **If you see problems:**

- Talk to the worker, and refer the worker to the instructions/conditions
- Ask to speak to the supervisor
- Call forestry department or tree commission

These conditions apply to city trees. Pruning of private property tree (trunk 6-8 ft from the street) is between NSTAR and the property owner.

For more info visit [www.newtontreeconservancy.org](http://www.newtontreeconservancy.org)

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✉ Katherine Howard

### **MISSION Newton Conservators, Inc.**

The Newton Conservators promotes the protection and preservation of natural areas, including parks, playgrounds, forests and streams, which are open or may be converted to open space for the enjoyment and benefit of the people of Newton. It further aims to disseminate information about these and other environmental matters.

A primary goal is to foster the acquisition of land, buildings and other facilities to be used for the encouragement of scientific, educational, recreational, literary and other public pursuits that will promote good citizenship and the general welfare of the people of our community.

*The Newton Conservators was formed as a not-for-profit organization 51 years ago in June 1961.*

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We welcome material related to our mission from any source. Send proposed articles or letters by email in MS Word or rich text format to [bethwilkinson@mac.com](mailto:bethwilkinson@mac.com). Digitized photographs, maps and diagrams are also welcome.

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SUMMER ISSUE

# NEWSLETTER

*Newton's land trust working to preserve open space since 1961*

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Rain Garden at Parmenter Elementary  
School, Franklin MA