

President's Message



PHOTO: KEN MALLORY

A Conservators' walk in Webster Woods

This is a very special issue of our newsletter, and it comes at a critical time for the future of open space in the City of Newton with its focus on the beloved area known as Webster Woods. You have seen the signs “Save Webster Woods” around the city for years now. And this month may truly be the culmination of much effort and dedication to make sure this crucial open space parcel will remain so for future generations.

As early proponents of the CPA (Community Preservation Act), Newton Conservators strongly supports the proposed acquisition of the current 17.4 acre open space portion of Webster Woods as proposed by Ruthanne Fuller, recommended by the Community Preservation Committee, and recently unanimously approved by the City Council. For years we have been urging protection of this critical portion of Webster Woods, which connects existing city and state conservation land, thus insuring its continued open-space use as originally intended by donor Edwin Webster. In this case, the whole is indeed more than the sum of its parts from an environmental perspective. Webster Woods is somewhat unique in Newton for its true “forest” quality that is mostly undisturbed by invasive understory – a place for easy meandering in quiet solitude.

The Webster Woods area has a long history, and we are very fortunate to be able to bring that to you in this issue due to the very fortuitous circumstance of a “ghost written” letter from one Edwin Webster, somehow mysteriously discovered by Newton Conservators’ board member Dan Brody. Dan also led the last of our recent special Webster Woods’ walks exploring the trail system that connects the land Boston College purchased three years ago with conservation land owned by the City and by the state Department of Conservation and Recreation. In the walk, visitors experienced scenic features such as Bare Pond, Gooch’s Cave, and Cake Rock.

Our other feature article this month recounts some of what we learned on an earlier fall walk in Webster Woods with the always informative and interesting Brandeis ecologist Eric Olson. You may remember that Eric was the recipient of our Environmentalist of the Year award this past year. He has a special talent for opening up nature-related topics to the average person as anyone who meets him can attest. We are so fortunate to have Eric as a contributor to this issue.

Finally, we continue to keep our eye on the NewCAL process and are moving ahead with exciting developments with the Riverside Trails Working Group, as the planning for this ambitious trail system starts to fall into place. We are very grateful for your continued support and hope you will renew your membership, which helps sustain our free walks, lectures, open space monitoring, invasives removal, advocacy, and more. Wishing you a wonderful holiday season, which hopefully includes getting out and enjoying the wonderful open spaces of Newton!

Ted Kuklinski

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President, Newton Conservators