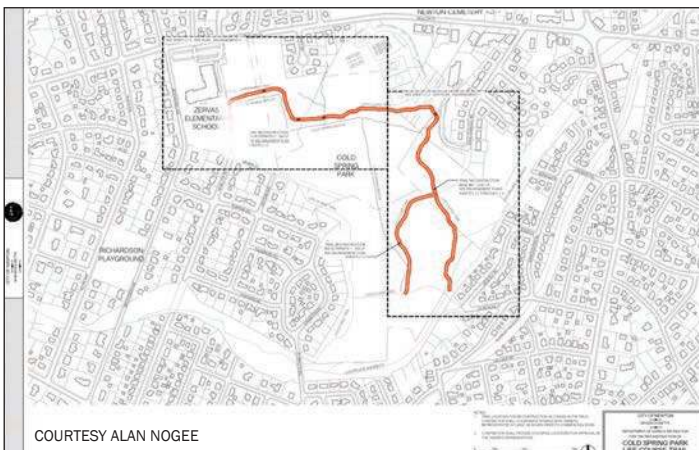


Cold Spring Park Has a New Look

By Alan Noguee, Park abutter and Founder, Friends of Cold Spring Park

Two years ago, I started a petition to restore the stone dust Life Course trail around Cold Spring Park to its original (1983) condition. The trail, which gets heavy use from walkers, runners, dog-walkers, and people of all ages, had become dangerously eroded. I encountered many stories of injuries from people who had tripped on exposed roots, rocks and landscape fabric. Perpetually muddy sections were everywhere, especially in the wetlands behind the playing fields off of Beacon Street.

More than 400 signatures and a meeting with the Department of Parks & Recreation and Culture later, it was clear that Parks & Rec would be supportive, but that most of the funds for a renovation would have to come from the community.



Phase 1 of the Cold Spring Park trail renovation (both rectangles).

With help from Newton Conservators, I started Friends of Cold Spring Park, with a goal of restoring the trail, and providing more protection for the park ecosystem and wildlife. Invasive plants, especially glossy buckthorn, have taken over approximately 90 percent of the park's understory, preventing germination of the red maple trees that comprise Cold Spring Park's red maple swamp — one of the city's oldest natural areas. Today, it is not clear the red maple swamp can endure, despite heroic efforts by the Newton Conservators to remove buckthorn.



Friends of Cold Spring Park present a check to Newton Mayor Fuller for their share of trail renovations.

Our first project was working with Eagle Scout Alex Rivero, and Boy Scout Troop 109 of Waban, to widen and extend wooden walkways over the muddiest sections of trail. Alex and his dad became key members in our core group, helping get the organization off the ground. Along the way, we helped organize opposition to siting the NewCAL Senior Center in Cold Spring or any other city park.

I cannot thank the Conservators enough for their help, including agreeing to be our fiscal sponsor until we achieved tax-exempt status on our own. Beth Wilkinson provided extensive brainstorming and strategic advice. Katherine Howard acted as our treasurer and continued to coordinate and increase invasive removal projects in Cold Spring Park (and all over the city). Henry Finch, along with Beth and Katherine, provided lots of input at our meetings. Bob Jampol, Bill Joplin, Becky Briesacher, Jon Goldberg, Councilor Andreae Downs, Jenn Martin, and Anndy Danenberg round out our core group, along with the Riveros. The Waban and Newton Highlands Area Council have provided moral support.

Parks & Rec staff members were incredibly helpful with the trail renovation. Stephanie Lapham maintained excellent communication with us and helped keep the project forward. New Open Space Coordinator Luis Perez Demorizi did detailed engineering drawings, specs, and managed the contracting process. Right before the coronavirus shutdowns, we presented a check to the mayor for our share of the project.

In April, we celebrated (via zoom) the completion of Phase I of the trail renovation, covering almost half of the 1.5 mile trail. You can now walk from the Beacon Street parking lot south to the dog park or to the Duncklee Street park entrance, or to the Zervas Elementary School, without mud or tripping hazards. We raised \$25,000 from individual donors, the Krieger Family Trust, and Newton Wellesley Hospital, half of which went to the first phase of trail restoration. We got a lucky break when *Defending Jacob* came to the park to film the AppleTV+ series by that name. At the request of our City Councilors from Wards 5 and 6,



PHOTO: BILL JOPLIN

Cold Spring park before trail renovation near the bridge by the Beacon Street Parking lot



PHOTO: BILL JOPLIN

Cold Spring park after trail renovation

Mayor Fuller negotiated a \$20,000 location fee to go toward trail restoration. Parks & Rec contributed \$9,000, about half of which came from dog park fees, to provide better access to the dog park.

We've made progress with invasive plants, too. In addition to removing more buckthorn and lots of garlic mustard,



PHOTO: BRUCE WENNING

Glossy Buckthorn

we worked with the Conservators to clear most of the small meadow at the intersection of the Life Course with the trail from Beaconwood of invasive Tree of Heaven (ailanthus) that had taken over the meadow. Last fall,

we scattered thousands of seeds of local native shrubs and wildflowers, some of which are now starting to come up.

We've helped educate the community about the natural resource value of the park. Sam Jaffe, who grew up next to and exploring the park, and now directs The Caterpillar Lab in Marlborough, New Hampshire, gave a fascinating keynote presentation to our public kickoff meeting last June. Brandeis biologist Eric Olson gave a wonderful public presentation on the red maple swamp at a Green Newton monthly meeting. We also built a website and Facebook

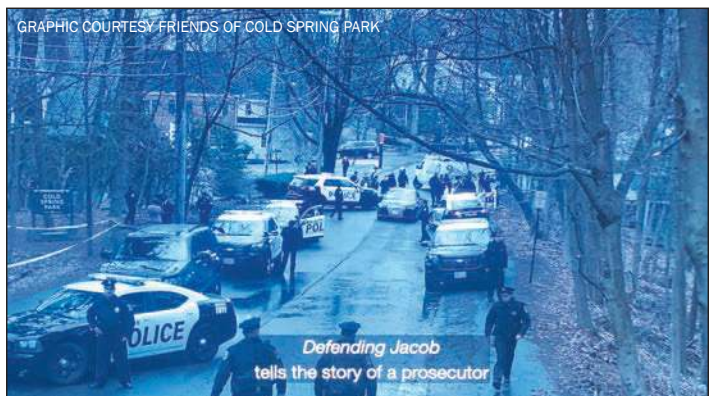
page with lots of information on the park and its many natural and recreational assets.

Last week, we received our 501c3 charitable status from the IRS. Good thing, because we still need to raise about \$60,000 to complete restoration of the trail, including the heavily used but very rocky section of the Cochituate Aqueduct (where a neighbor just tripped and had a bad fall). We intend to develop a park management plan and do more native plant restoration. And we will advocate for permanent protection for this incredible green space in the heart of Newton. Come for a visit some time! And please consider supporting us, along with the Conservators.



Friends of Cold Spring Park website

For more information about the park, see the Newton Conservators' Spring 2019 newsletter with an article entitled "Cold Spring Park needs some love." https://newtonconservators.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/19win_cold_spring.pdf ♦



Apple TV production of Defending Jacob shot partially in Cold Spring Park