

President's Message

What a strange summer we have had in these Covid-19 times! Vacation plans have been upended, kids' summer camp canceled, borders closed, airline travel curtailed, school plans uncertain, weddings postponed, birthday parties virtualized, beaches restricted, and basically our summer full of fun times deflated! But with all this, outdoor activities and our open spaces have become our saving refuge with way more exploring, walking, hiking, and biking activity.

Even with the pandemic, our open space work continued. Although we had to cancel our public invasives programs due to Covid, our dedicated Invasives Team took on removal projects across the city tackling garlic mustard, knotweed, black swallow-wort, tree of heaven, and other non-native species. Coming soon, we have a major new section of our website dedicated to the recognition and control of the invasives found in Newton. Our hillside Dexter Woods property has benefited from many new native plantings this spring and, thanks to watering volunteers, has done well despite the dry late summer weather.

When Massachusetts DCR finally allowed volunteer work on their managed properties, Trail Team volunteers assisted with helping restoration of the Pony Truss Trail along a beautiful section of the Charles River, which will be part of the larger Riverside Greenway. And, as part of the agreement for the new Riverside development, other key sections of the Greenway will be built and funded by the developer. In other Riverside Greenway news, the design and planning for the re-configuration of Commonwealth Avenue carriageway near Lyons Field is being undertaken.

Our CR Monitoring Teams have already started their annual surveys of the numerous properties for which we hold conservation restrictions. Additional volunteers are always welcome to join these teams, which have experienced leaders and work with appropriate social distancing and Covid precautions.

Worthy of mention is the stream work at the beautiful Houghton Garden along with a wonderful new section of accessible pathway. The pond work there will await sufficient rain to bring the water level up enough for hydro-raking equipment to handle the buildup of material over the last hundred years or so. Houghton Garden is truly one of the open space gems in Newton and worth seeking out.

As you may remember, our annual Newton Conservators Dinner Meeting, which was to be held on May 3, 2020, at American Legion Post 440, was postponed to Wednesday, October 21, 2020. We are sad to announce that due to the ongoing Covid-19 situation, the continuing need for social distancing, and concern for our attendees in a higher risk category, our board has decided not to hold an in-person meeting that day, but to make it a virtual event on Zoom instead.

This virtual event will be a shortened form of our in-person meeting, which will include election of board and officers, organization update, awards announcements, and an engaging speaker presentation. Next year's Annual Dinner Meeting is now scheduled for Wednesday, May 5, 2021, at American Legion Post 440, and this year's award recipients will be honored in person at that event. Remember to save the Dates: Wednesday, Oct 21, 2020 and Wednesday, May 5, 2021.

Due to the ongoing pandemic uncertainty and continuing need for strict social distancing, we felt we had to suspend our traditional Fall Walk Series this year. The good news is that we will be inaugurating a Fall Webinar Series in its place featuring many of our local experts on a variety of interesting nature topics from September through November. See the full schedule in this issue; please register early online in the Events section on our website since we have a limit of 100 participants for each webinar. Our registration process is automated, and registrants will receive a link and reminder in advance.

Please enjoy this informative newsletter issue, and in particular learn about turtles inhabiting our local ponds and streams, and learn more about annual happenings at Bare Pond, a vernal pool in our recently acquired Webster Woods parcel. This fall, please get out and enjoy our foliage-festooned open spaces safely, using proper social distancing and masks where appropriate. Better times are ahead!

All the best,

Ted Kuklinski

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President, Newton Conservators