

## **Friends of Upton State Forest 2012 Annual Report**

It was another good year for Friends of Upton State Forest (FUSF) in our efforts to preserve, enhance and protect the natural and historic resources of Upton State Forest in partnership with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR).

Some of our partners at DCR changed in 2012. In May, jurisdiction for Upton State Forest was transferred from the Hopkinton Complex in the Metrowest District of the Northeast Region, to the Blackstone Heritage Canal and State Park in the new Central Valley District of the Central Region. We were sad to say good-bye to the Hopkinton staff that had been responsible for the day-to-day operations of our state forest for the past five years. We welcomed back some old friends from the Blackstone Complex that we had worked with in the past.

We have grown and established ourselves as a respected Friends group since our start in 2005. We look forward to continuing our valuable partnership with the DCR, and others, for the benefit of Upton State Forest. We appreciate all that our members have done.

### **National Recognition**

We are proud to report that we have received national recognition through an award to co-founder and former president, Ellen Arnold. The National Association of State Park Directors recognized Ellen at its annual meeting in September with one of its Presidents Awards, recognizing “outstanding achievement by individuals and organizations that help preserve and enhance our state parks throughout the nation.”

Edward M. Lambert, Jr., Commissioner of the Department of Conservation and Recreation, and Priscilla Geigis, Director of State Parks, presented the award to Ellen during the Massachusetts Park and Friends Network conference held in Worcester on November 17th. Details of the award are in our winter 2013 newsletter.

### **Historic Resources Committee Report**

#### **Third Grade Program**

Once again, third-graders from Upton’s Memorial School visited the CCC Camp to experience “A Day in the Life of the CCC.” Tim Rayworth of the DCR CCC Program Committee, with the help of the Friends and Mrs. Maglione of Upton Memorial School, developed this program. Members Frank Evans, Bill Taylor, Joan Shanahan and Ellen Arnold assisted. Lois Breault-Melican, Val Stegemoen, and Jennifer Schafer of DCR also helped. An orienteering activity set up by Jeff Leclair of Fin and Feather Sports Shop was a new addition to the program this year.

The program is a partnership between FUSF, DCR, and Upton Memorial School third grade teachers.

## **CCC Records Project**

The Friends raised \$9,600 for the conservation of original CCC planning documents for Upton State Forest (USF). We raised \$3,200 through our own fundraising effort and received a 2:1 matching grant of \$6,400 under a DCR grant program. The project is now getting underway and the first step is to decide which records to preserve. DCR recently discovered another group of USF CCC records so the list of records to choose from has more than doubled. The records include plans for the CCC camp layout, Park Road, Dean Pond dam, a water tower that was never built, the Hurley Truck Trail, water holes, and recreational areas. They are an invaluable addition to the history of the CCC at USF. The decision about which records to preserve will be made by DCR with input from the Friends. We are using the following criteria to prioritize them: practical value, historic value, interpretive value and value of digitizing.

## **Action Items Under the Memorandum of Understanding**

We continued to work with DCR toward completion of the action items from the 2011 Memorandum of Understanding between DCR, Massachusetts Historical Commission, Upton Historical Commission and the Friends related to the demolition of the historic North Barn at Upton State Forest. This includes actions to stabilize, maintain and preserve the Infirmary/Cottage and Headquarters buildings and to develop a Cultural Resources Management Plan. Remaining action items include the development of an Interpretive Plan for USF.

## **Preservation of the CCC Buildings**

DCR stabilized the Cottage. Scaffolding was installed to support the roof, water and mold damaged wall and ceiling material was removed, and roofing materials containing asbestos were removed and replaced. DCR also had trees that were a hazard to the Headquarters building removed or trimmed.

## **Historic Curatorship Program**

DCR solicited proposals for the rehabilitation, reuse and long-term lease of the Cottage and Headquarters buildings under its Historic Curatorship program. Under this program, individuals or organizations propose a use for a historic DCR building and agree to rehabilitate, manage and maintain it in return for a long-term lease. The proposals are evaluated based in part on the proposed use of the building and the financial viability of the plan. Unfortunately, DCR did not find a suitable candidate and is now working on a new plan to stabilize, maintain and preserve Upton's CCC buildings as agreed in the MOU. The due date for this plan is December 31<sup>st</sup>.

In connection with DCR's request for Historic Curatorship proposals, Kevin Allen of DCR and Marcella Stasa and Bill Taylor of the Friends were interviewed for a segment about the Upton curatorship on Worcester cable that was also shown on NECN.

### **Cultural Resources Management Plan**

DCR completed the first draft of the Cultural Resources Management Plan. It has been reviewed within DCR by its staff and given to the Upton Historical Commission and the Friends for our comment. The Friends have responded with our comments.

### **Cultural Resources Inventory**

The Resource Inventory Committee helped DCR prepare the Cultural Resources Management Plan by identifying and mapping cultural resources in Upton State Forest (for example, cellar holes, wells, stone quarries, stonewalls and other stone features.) FUSF members contributed over 200 hours to the project in 2012. We will continue this work in 2013.

### **National Register Application for the CCC Historic District**

We have been advised that the review for the National Register Application has not been scheduled, at this time. It is not unusual for the approval to take up to two years.

### **Recreation/Trails Committee Report**

This committee currently does not have a Chair. If you are interested in serving on this committee, we would like to hear from you.

### **Park Serve Day**

The Friends partnered with DCR to sponsor Park Serve Day in April. Twenty-seven volunteers contributed 117 hours, picking up trash along Southborough road, removing underbrush from around the Cottage and cleaning up the grounds. The volunteers included members of Troop 132 and DCR staff.

### **Adopt a Trailhead**

FUSF members also helped keep the trailhead kiosks supplied with maps, reported downed trees and other trail issues to the park staff, and maintained the Entrance Gateway gardens.

## **Park Watch**

With our transfer to the new Central Valley District, we have a new District Ranger. Dave Furey was featured in our winter newsletter and we look forward to working with him to protect the resources of Upton State Forest.

## **Be Safe, Be Seen**

Throughout the year, we promote safety by reminding people in e-mails and in our newsletters to wear visible clothing when outdoors. We also carry safety orange clothing as part of our merchandise line.

## **Program Subcommittee Report**

We continued our educational and awareness efforts in 2012 through our Discovery programs and hikes. Together, with the Upton Open Space Committee, we applied for, and were awarded grants by Upton's Local Cultural Council for the "Sense of Place" program with Erica Wheeler, and "Reading the Forested Landscape" program with Tom Wessels. Priscilla Geigis, Director of State Parks, attended the concert and expressed her appreciation to the Friends for their support of quality programming. The Wessels program was an all-day event with the largest turnout so far for a Discovery program. About 60 people, from 22 zip codes, attended. This program also received support from Grafton's Local Cultural Council and Metacomet Land Trust. We appreciated the assistance of DCR staff including Val Stegemoen, Jeanne Decenza-Gilleneay and Dave Furey.

Other joint FUSF-Open Space programs included Discover Whistling Cave, led by DCR's Richard Trubiano, and a demonstration by Captain Jennifer Stowe of the Bureau of Ranger Services of the skills of Emmitt Francis, her search and rescue dog. Kathy Ward and her SAR dog, Eva, assisted her. Several FUSF members led programs. Bill Taylor presented a history of Upton's Open Spaces at the annual meeting. Bill and Jane Milligan led a letterboxing hike at the park and Gerry Lemire of the Elusive Whitetail Hunter Education Program led a "shed hunt" (a search for antler shed by deer) at Upton's Stefans Farm. Tom Dodd led a butterfly walk at Stefans Farm.

Other community activities included having a FUSF booth at the Rally for the Valley at River Bend Farm, the Upton Fourth of July fireworks, and Upton's Heritage Day.

## **Membership Committee Report**

In 2012, we had a total of 132 paid members. We are currently taking renewals for 2013 and have received several new memberships. The Board has been discussing goals for increasing our membership and ways to do that.

## **General Items**

### **Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors meet monthly to oversee the activities of the Friends as well as to meet the obligations required of 501(c)3 organizations. The required annual filings with state agencies and the IRS have been submitted. The Secretary records the minutes of our Board and General Member meetings and the minutes have been approved by the Board and are available upon request. The Treasurer reports monthly to the Board and the Auditor reviews the financial records. The Auditor found the 2011 records to be accurate and complete, and will report the results of the review of the 2012 records to the Board by their March meeting.

### **Election of Officers 2012**

A bylaws review and updates voted on at our annual meeting changed the composition of the Board. For this reason, the membership authorized deferring election of officers to the May meeting. Members elected were President, William Taylor; Vice President, Steve Warren; Secretary, Mary McManus; Corresponding Secretary, Agnita Knott; Treasurer, Chris Scott; and Members at Large, Chip Kent, Gerry Lemire, Marcella Stasa and Jerry Zaslow. Also serving on the Board are Past President, Joan Shanahan, and Historic Resources Chairman, Ellen Arnold. The Recreation/Trails Committee Chair position is vacant at this time.

### **Bylaws Update**

The Bylaw Review Committee worked in the last quarter of 2011 to review and update our bylaws. The changes were presented, and voted on at our Annual Meeting, in 2012. The major change allowed for more members at large to serve on the Board. This has resulted in new members with new ideas and has worked very well. There are more openings if anyone is interested in joining.

## **Other Items**

### **Massachusetts Forest and Parks Friends Network (MFPFN)**

Recognizing that we work with a state agency that oversees a large and varied park system we continue to network through MFPFN with other Friends groups. The Network helps keep Friends groups informed about common issues, supports the start-up of new Friends groups, and provides support to groups like ours.

In November, Captain Jennifer Stowe was nominated by Ellen Arnold of FUSF for one of the Massachusetts Forest and Park Friends Network's 2012 DCR Friend of the Year Awards. Ellen nominated Captain Stowe for all the support she has provided to our

activities. She had led programs, attended our meetings, and implemented Park Watch at the park. She worked at Upton State Forest when it was still the home of the mounted unit, and has shared pictures and other information for our newsletters. She also helped the Nipmuc Rod and Gun Club raise \$8,000 for St. Jude's Hospital by participating in their fundraising event with Emmitt Francis.

### **FUSF Merchandise Sales**

The purpose of our merchandise sales is two-fold. It provides a limited income, but more importantly, it is a form of branding and public relations. When people wear our tee shirts, sweatshirts and hats with our logo, it generates interest in FUSF membership. We added a children's line of safety orange and forest green tee shirts. The merchandise is available at meetings, through our website, and at "A Little Common Sense."

FUSF member Lisa Stratton graciously offered to carry FUSF merchandise at her new store, "A Little Common Sense". This allows people to purchase our merchandise at their convenience, instead of having to contact us to meet to pick up their purchase. In January, she moved from 62 Main Street to 8 North Main Street, which is behind the Upton Common. We hope you will drop by for her grand reopening on February 9 and 10, from 10AM to 4PM, and see our display in her store. She is on Facebook as A Little Common Sense and she has a website at [www.uptoncommon.com](http://www.uptoncommon.com).

### **2013 Priorities**

Our priorities for 2013 are to continue to work with DCR to preserve the Infirmary/Cottage and Headquarters buildings, to complete the Cultural Resources Management Plan, and to complete a plan for interpretative programs for the CCC and other cultural resources at the forest. We will also be working with DCR on their Interpretive Plan and Resource Management Plan for the Forest.

We also plan to raise funds to purchase an off-highway vehicle for the Upton Police Department (for public safety and enforcement purposes) and to complete a project to build a bog bridge on the Rabbit Run trail. Another goal for the year is to increase our membership. Our existing members can help us by encouraging others to join.

We are also working to create databases to assist with membership and merchandise tracking.

Finally, and most importantly, the Board of Directors wishes to express thanks to all our members for their ongoing support. We are also appreciative of the many DCR staff that care for Upton State Forest and their willingness to work with us.

Respectfully submitted by the Board of Directors.