FRIENDS OF UPTON STATE FOREST

NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Number 4 August 2006

****

President's Message

By Ellen Arnold

Striking a Balance

Article 2 of our By Laws is our mission statement. "To preserve, enhance and protect the natural and historic resources of Upton State Forest."

Recently I reviewed the membership applications so that I can better understand what is important to you about Upton State Forest. What I found is that our membership covers the spectrum of activities from dog walking to mountain biking. About the only interest that we don't have a member involved with is dog sledding. (YET)!

Most of you have more than one interest and a large majority of you are hikers. Several of you are interested in art and photography. Some of you geo-cache. We are hunters, equestrians, snowmobilers, cross country skiers, snow shoers and more.

What interested me most is the number of interests that are more intrinsic values than recreational activities. This includes open space preservation, bird/wildlife watching, education and historical.

I was pleased to see this because it speaks to the Big Picture. We have to create a balance between our enjoyment of the forest and its recreational opportunities while respecting the land and its past.

This will ensure the future.

****Members Picnic****
* August 26* at Upton State Forest
Rain or Shine-Starting at Noon

We will be cooking hot dogs ($1.25) and hamburgers ($1.75) or you can brown bag your lunch. Coffee, soda, water and snacks will be provided. Please bring a dessert to share. Lunch is from noon to 2 PM. There will be children's activities and Ranger, Val Stegemoen will lead a historic walk at 2 PM or you can just relax and enjoy good company. A port-a-let is being provided.

There will be raffles of some great prizes to help cover expenses. Chances are $1.00 each or six for $5.00. Drawings will be on Sunday at the Bay State Trail Riders Scavenger Hunt. If you would like to donate a basket or items for the raffle call Ellen at 508-529-6610. We already have a picnic tote, a car emergency kit and a piece of wheeled luggage.

The picnic is for members and their guests. If you plan on attending please RSVP by 08/21 with the number attending to fusf@charter.net or 529-6610.

September 18 General Meeting
7 PM Upton Senior Center

Sharon Hoey, Director of the Conservation Trust for the Department of Conservation and Recreation will speak about the Trust and Iron Rangers. Many improvements at parks throughout the state have been possible because of donations in the Iron Rangers.

Walking, Hiking and Beyond

By John Fahy

This article is the second in a series about the use of forest trails by those who walk, hike or trail run. The first article discussed the health benefits. In this article John will cover weather, safety, going solo and equipment.

Since a forest environment includes uneven pathways and some elevation change you should prepare yourself for this level of exertion. Remember to check with your doctor if you are just starting out.

Seventeen days after thigh surgery I called my brother, Norm to ask him to go for a hike on Mt. Wachusett since I knew I **shouldn't do it solo**. My surgeon said it was ok as long as I used **common sense** and stopped hiking if the incision hurt. Although I had been doing some hiking at Upton State Forest a hike on even a small mountain is quite different.

We discussed a **plan** and **checked the weather**. It was going to be warm and partly cloudy with **no chance for a lightning storm**. If the weather started to turn we could **turn back quickly.** Norm reminded me to bring a **cell phone** in case of emergency.

Referring to a **trail map,** the plan was to go up the Bicentennial Trail to Loop Trail and then Mountain House to the summit. We would come down the shorter Pine Hill Trail. Of course, before leaving I would **tell** my wife our route and approximate time to expect us home.

Since this is a moderately rocky road I reminded Norm to wear good **hiking boots** and to carry at least one **hiking pole**. For clothing we wore **polypropylene instead of cotton**. We wore **caps** or **a bandanna** and carried **sunglasses**. Each of us had two **water** bottles, trail mix **snacks and fruit**.

Our **first aid kit** included a **tick remover, insect repellant, SPF 30 sun tan lotion** and a **whistle** for emergencies.

Norm grouched that it was a lot of stuff to carry. I replied that it would all fit in a **day pack** along with a light **wind breaker jacket**. It could be cool and windy at the summit.

After agreeing to this **common sense plan,** Norm agreed to pick me up at 7:30 AM saying "You pay for the gas and coffee."

The Stitches Held!

John Fahy on Pine Hill Trail
N. Fahy photo

Logo Contest Design Winner

Trinity Scanlon (center), June 10, 2006
Karen Ober left), Ellen Arnold (right)

CCC Day, June 10. 2006

In spite of the gloomy weather over 50 people enjoyed the day as they celebrated Upton State Forest. Some of the outdoor activities were cancelled but Chris Scott led one Beaver Walk and Val Stegemoen managed to get in one historical walk to Dean Pond.

Mountain Man, Ray Pillie, from Southboro Rod & Gun Club set up camp. Later in the day he demonstrated starting a camp fire using a flint.

Since we cancelled the outdoor games for children we set up a room for them to color animal pictures and do nature rubbings. Smokey Bear was a big hit with young and old as he made several appearances.

At noon we presented the award for our student logo design contest. Winner, Trinity Scanlon of Upton, was given a $50.00 American Express gift certificate and a free family membership. Her design and essay showed her understanding of our mission statement.

Everyone enjoyed the exhibits and visiting with CCC alumni from as far away as Connecticut. The bake sale and coffee pot were popular as well. Maybe we couldn't hike but that didn't stop us from eating! Lou and Marion Despres moved the music indoors so as we ate we enjoyed CCC era tunes.

Thank you to everyone that worked to make this day a success.

Mountain Man, Ray Pillie

Local History Bus Tour

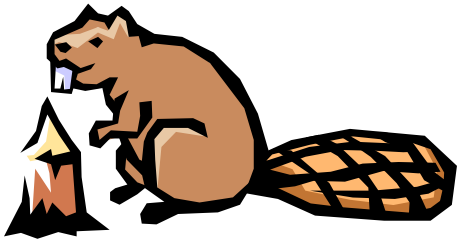
On June 8 third grade students visited Upton State Forest as part of their local history curriculum. Their visit was made possible by a partnership between the Memorial School third grade teachers, Upton Historical Society, the Department of Conservation & Recreation CCC Committee and the Friends.

Prior to the visit CCC alumnus Frank Evans and Tim Rayworth of DCR visited the classrooms. The students were shown a power point history of the CCC and the role they played at Upton State Forest. After the presentation the students were able to talk to Frank about his personal experience.

At the forest Ranger Val Stegemoen took them on a short hike into the forest. In the Administration Building they saw displays and Tim had them use a map of the forest to locate where they were. They reviewed what they had learned in the classroom. It was interesting to see how much they had retained and how they used that knowledge as part of what they were experiencing. All of the students got a chance to try out a two man saw. Not only did they enjoy doing that but they got a taste of how much work was involved in making the forest we enjoy today.

Erin & Conor Dugas with Smokey Bear

Nature's Engineers at
Upton State Forest



By Chris Scott

You may have wondered what was causing the increased water levels near the entrance road to Upton State Forest. Not only is the above average rainfall causing the bog and wetlands to be wetter than normal but beavers have been busy there. Beaver take an environment with flowing water, a lake or a pond and modify it to make their home. They build a lodge to live in and make a dam high enough to raise the level so it covers the underwater entrances to the lodge.The beaver only make the water level high enough to cover their underwater entrance so that they can escape predators. Several lodges can be seen from Southborough Rd. if you look carefully.

Beavers are herbivores, only eating trees, herbaceous plants and some aquatic vegetation. They are selective in their choices of trees to eat. Aspen, birch, oak, maple, poplar, willows, alder and ash are all common trees in a beaver's diet. They also need to eat trees to grind down their teeth to prevent death from having their teeth grow back into their skulls. A beaver can weigh up to 40 to 50 pounds and have a life expectancy of about ten years. They are territorial, sending their young (kits) off on their own when they are about 2 ½ years old. Listen carefully next time you are along the park road. You may hear a beaver slap his tail on the water. This is one of the ways they communicate with other beaver. He is probably warning them about you!

Beavers are well known for modifying an environment in a way that makes it more suitable habitat for other species. This is known as being a keystone species. You may notice mallard ducks and great blue herons at the forest taking advantage of the change in habitat. The change in water level can also negatively impact other organisms such as dragonflies that require exposed mounds of sphagnum moss for their habitat. At Upton the mounds are being covered by the change in water levels. In addition the high water is causing occasional flooding of the road

Beaver management has become a hot topic in Massachusetts. Breaching a beaver dam is futile because they will build it back overnight. Trapping is a last resort because another beaver will take their place very quickly.

At Upton State Forest plans and permitting are moving forward to install water level control devices and beaver deceivers on both sides of Southborough Rd. The beaver deceivers consist of flexible 8" PVC pipe 15-20 feet in length. These are installed into the existing beaver dam so that water can continue to flow through the dammed area. The end of the pipe behind the dam is enclosed in a wire cage to prevent the beaver from clogging it. The cage and PVC pipe is weighted down. The downstream end of the pipe is far enough away from the dam so that the beaver cannot hear the running water. Thus the deception! Monitoring of the site and adjusting of the beaver deceiver is done to ensure its success. These devices are due to be installed in the next month by the Upton DPW and a beaver consultant.

Historical Resources at Upton State Forest

What do we mean when we refer to historical resources in our mission statement and why are they important?

The most obvious historical resources are the remaining buildings of Civilian Conservation Corps Camp SP25 located at the headquarters area. They are of national importance because there are very few remaining camp buildings in the country. These are three of only five in Massachusetts.

Other historic resources include stone walls and cellar holes as well as old roads some of which are incorporated into the existing trail system. There are remnants of CCC construction including water holes, stone steps to vistas and picnic areas. Dean Pond Dam was constructed by the C's on the site of a dam that was part of a mill in operation until 1882 when the previous dam washed out.

Between 1933 and 1934 the state started purchasing parcels of land and designated Upton State Forest in 1935 which was the same year the CCC camp opened. Long before the property was a state forest there were farms and mills on these lands. In the largest contiguous area of the forest there was a group of settlers that tried to secede from the Commonwealth earning this area the nickname "New State".

There is little of what we know as state forest that has not felt the hand of man and been changed in some way. Even the ledges were quarried for monuments, mill stones and building foundations. Evidence of that is throughout the forest as you can see the marks of the feathers and wedges on the stone.

After the C's left Upton to work at Salisbury Beach the camp was used by the Youth Progress Administration, by the Massachusetts State Guards during WWII as Camp Stover, by the Fish and Wildlife as the Massachusetts Field Headquarters and by the forerunner of the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) as offices for foresters, carpenters and finally by the Mounted Ranger Unit. Today the department practices search and rescue at Upton and so the story continues.

All of the evidence of prior occupation and use of the forest is an important part of the experience of enjoying the forest. It is typical of what is found throughout New England and is a part of what we are today.

In future newsletters we will try to chronicle some of these stories.

Save the Date

November 13, 2006 7PM
At Upton Senior Center

Last general meeting for 2006.
Program and details to be announced

Acronyms

It was pointed out that in the last newsletter I used acronyms without identifying what they were. I apologize for this and will try to avoid that in the future. Here are some definitions of the ones I used for those who are not familiar with the various terms.

BSTRA=Bay State Trail Riders Association (another user group)
DCR=Department of Conservation and Recreation
ORV=off road vehicles
EPO=Environmental Police Officer

Friends of Upton State Forest
PO Box 258
Upton, MA 01568-0258

National Public Lands Day

We will be participating in National Public Lands Day on **Saturday, September 23, 2006 from 9AM to 12 noon**. This is a day of volunteer service at public parks and water supplies to honor the service of the men of the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Meet at the parking lot in front of the Administration Building at 9AM. Coffee and goodies will be ready to give you energy. Bring hand tools, saws and brush cutters. **No power tools.** We will be brushing back one trail and removing invasive plants from the trail head parking area. Participants will be required to sign a liability waiver.

Bring your lunch and we will provide soda, water, coffee and dessert.

Wear work clothes and gloves. Bring insect repellant and sunscreen lotion.

Everyone that participates will have their names in a drawing for a free membership.

Membership Update

As of July 17 we reached 100 members from 3 states. That was our goal for January 2007 so now we are striving for 125 by our annual meeting.

We are offering a summer special of half price membership for all but the Associate category. Let your friends and neighbors know and encourage them to join.

Canoe Trip on Old Zac

Mike Penko will be leading a canoe trip on the West River sponsored by the Friend's and Upton Open Space Committee on **October 7, 2006**. Reservations must be made to participate. If you want to join Mike contact us at fusf@charter.net or PO Box 258, Upton, 01568 for more information. Liability waivers will be required.

We will paddle from Pleasant St. through a little explored part of Upton State Forest to Old Zac, a pond on the West River. On the way we will see how the pond and state forest land is threatened by Phragmites (a tall invasive grass) and portage around several low beaver dams. Join Mike as he navigates this interesting and beautiful area.

West River Phragmites M. Penko photo