



**Friends of Upton State Forest Newsletter**  
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### President's Message

*By Bill Taylor*

On November 21, Ellen Arnold and I went to a public meeting in Amherst, to learn about the draft *Volunteers in Parks Program*. The intention of the new policy is to “standardize and simplify the process for proposing, reviewing and conducting all volunteer activities.” This was the last of six meetings for people to ask questions and give feedback on the document.

On Dec 7, the annual meeting of the Massachusetts Forest and Parks Friends Network took place in Upton. The group represents common interests of all Friends groups, striving to make all groups more effective through “strength in numbers” and mutual aid. This year, the theme was “Focus on Friends” with the goal of helping Friends groups be more effective by sharing best practices and working together to solve problems. There are at least 50 Friends groups across the state, and each group has learned about effective stewardship, on behalf of a DCR property.

These events bring home to me just how important volunteers are to the health of our parks and forests. There are probably about 10,000 members in the various Friends groups, which is a formidable present day “tree army.” DCR recognizes the importance of volunteers saying, “Volunteers and volunteerism ... are as essential to the sustainability of our parks and forests system as operational funding.” Our group is an important part of the overall effort. Thanks for helping out. *Bill*

### Annual Meeting and Program

**Friday, January 10, 7:00 PM**

**Upton VFW, 15 Milford St, Upton  
(Snow date, Tuesday, Jan 14)**

#### Featuring Mark Blazis presenting “Deer of the World”

After a brief business meeting with election of officers, Mark Blazis returns to present another program for us. Mark is a writer, wildlife biologist, and safari leader. He studies, photographs, and occasionally hunts deer around the world. The more than 40 species of the family have led him to five continents. Their variety is amazing! We will learn about most of them, going far beyond our local white-tailed deer.

The public is welcome to this free program. To receive notice of a change in date due to snow, send an email to [uptonopenspaceevents@charter.net](mailto:uptonopenspaceevents@charter.net).

### Remembering Emmitt Francis

Our sympathy goes out to Captain Jennifer Stowe, our former Regional Ranger, on the passing of her DCR Search and Rescue Dog, Emmitt Francis, who had special ties to Upton. We will miss seeing Jenn and Emmitt training on the trails here.



## Cultural Resources Management Plan



Mike Penko takes GPS coordinates of one of several historic millstones in Upton State Forest

We are pleased to have received copies of the Cultural Resources Management Plan for Upton State Forest. This project was a stipulation of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Mass. Historical Commission, a result of the loss of the North Barn. Members of the FUSF Resource Inventory Team worked with the DCR Office of Cultural Resources to document the resources included in the plan.

A copy of the CRMP has been sent to the Upton Town Library, and it will be online through the DCR website. When it goes online, you will be able to access it from the Upton State Forest page. <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-central/upton-state-forest.html>.

We enjoyed working with and learning from the DCR staff. Thank you to everyone that assisted by reporting sites, sharing pictures and working with the Resource Inventory Team. If you know of any historic sites within any of the Upton State Forest parcels, we are still interested in hearing from you. We will continue to document anything we have not already found.

## A Special Visit to the CCC Camp!



Dick Turner and Joe Nava

On a cool day in late October, several members of FUSF, Marion Larson from Mass Wildlife, and some DCR staff welcomed visitors from the past to the CCC Camp. Joe Nava, a FUSF member who lives in Alaska, was visiting in the area. In the 1950's he worked at Phillip's Wildlife Lab, which was located in the former CCC buildings at Upton. We asked Joe to stop by and share his memories with us. Marion Larson arranged for their retired department historian, James Cardoza, and Dick Turner, long-time Mass Wildlife employee to come too. By chance, DCR Park Supervisor, Val Stegemoen, and Tim Rayworth and Kristin Karl-Carnahan from DCR Interpretive Services were at the Forest working on the Interpretive Plan, another stipulation in the MOA. FUSF members Ellen Arnold, Agnita Knott, Marcella Stasa and Rufin van Bossuyt were on hand to record the memories.

Upton Cable loaned a video camera for the day and we were able to get some great footage to share. We hope to interview one or two more people who were at Phillips Wildlife Lab, and then share it a meeting and through Upton's Cable Access Station.

## Friends Network Conference



FUSF President, Bill Taylor

On Dec. 7, the Massachusetts Forest and Parks Friends Network (MFPFN) held their sixth annual conference at the Upton VFW. The group is a network of Friends groups for parks managed by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), which manages 449,000 acres of parks, forests, beaches, and other diverse facilities. Fifty-five people, representing 24 Friends groups, and DCR, traveled from throughout Massachusetts for the event. The group gave a round of applause to FUSF cofounder and member, Frank Evans for his service in the Civilian Conservation Corps.

Moderator, Ellen Arnold, a Friends Network Facilitator introduced keynote speaker, the DCR Commissioner Jack Murray, who spoke about the diverse properties his department manages and the important role that Friends groups can play to enhance our parks. He emphasized the mission statement of DCR to “protect, promote and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural and recreational resources for the well being of all.” Commissioner Murray joined Friends Network Facilitator, Claudia Hurley in an awards ceremony for volunteers whose work benefits

Massachusetts state parklands in an extraordinary way, and to DCR employees for exemplary efforts on behalf of forests, parks, beaches, trails and Friends or other volunteer groups. Included in the awards were the DCR Office of Cultural Resources, and FUSF volunteer, Michael Penko, both nominated by FUSF.

Other presenters included Joseph Orfant, Chief of the DCR Planning and Resource Protection Bureau speaking about Resource Management Plans. Acting Chief Ranger, Chris Williams, described the duties and jurisdiction of DCR Rangers, and MFPFN Facilitator, Sharl Heller, discussed “Progress in Parks” comparing the results of a recent survey done by MFPFN to comments from the Partners in Parks conference in 2007. Bill Taylor of FUSF gave a presentation about “Places of the Heart: Successful Cultural Resources Partnerships” with examples from FUSF and Friends of the Middlesex Fells.

FUSF members assisting or attending included Ellen Arnold, Kathy Craib, Frank Evans, David Kennedy, Mike Penko, Chris Scott, Marcella Stasa and Bill Taylor.

Pictures of the event, a complete list of award recipients, and more information about MFPFN, are available at [www.networkingfriends.net](http://www.networkingfriends.net).



Frank Evans and Ellen Arnold of FUSF with DCR Commissioner, Jack Murray

### **Membership Report**

We are pleased to welcome the following new members: Nick Galeone and Linda Moore of Upton, and Lillian Scanlon of Blackstone. Conner Shults, also of Upton, became a full member. He had formerly been part of his parent's family membership.

In 2013, our goal was to increase our membership by 10%. We reached that goal, with 143 members to date! Your membership dues for 2014 are due now. There is a 10% discount for anyone who renews by, or at the annual meeting in January. A membership form is included with this newsletter. We are also extending the 10% discount to anyone that joins as a new member at the annual meeting.

Your membership dues support our activities and make a statement that Upton State Forest is important to you. If you know anyone with an interest in our forest, please share your newsletter and invite them to join. We have members in Alaska, North Carolina, Maine, Rhode Island and Connecticut, and from the Cape to the Berkshires. Some of our members enjoy the forest regularly, while some have good memories of the trails and Dean Pond, and others are interested in the history, wildlife and other resources.

Supporting us benefits the forest and we appreciate your support!

### **CCC Way Closed For Season**

CCC Way has been closed for the season and all parking will be at the Headquarters area. Doing this helps preserve the road surface. Please do not park in front of the gate in case there is a need for emergency access.

### **Nominating Committee Report**

The annual election of officers and directors will take place at our annual meeting on January 10. We will be voting on the following:

President: Bill Taylor  
Vice President: Steve Warren  
Recording Secretary: Mary McManus  
Corresponding Sec: Agnita Knott  
Treasurer: Chris Scott

Members at Large (4): Chip Kent, Gerry Lemire, Marcella Stasa, and Jerry Zaslow.

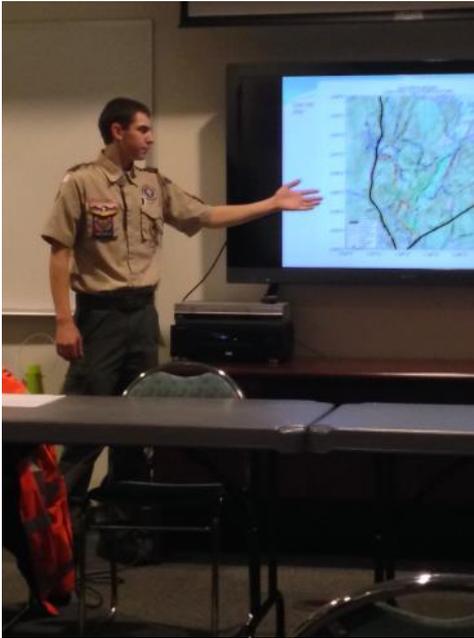
### **Curt Rudge Retires**



Chief Park Ranger, Curt Rudge patrolling at Mount Greylock, on Mocha Chip  
Photo courtesy of J. Stowe

We wish all the best to Chief Park Ranger, Curt Rudge, who recently retired from the DCR. You may remember his presentation at one of our meetings about the former Mounted Unit, based at Upton State Forest from 1981 to 2003. In recent years, he was sometimes seen at Upton training Search and Rescue Dogs. Our thanks go out to Curt for his role in bringing Park Watch to Upton, and his many years of service dedicated to keeping our parks safe for all to enjoy.

## Eagle Scout Project Completed!



Over two years ago, Conner Shults came to our Board meeting to introduce his Eagle Scout project and to ask for our support. On November 18, the Board attended a presentation of his completed project at the Upton Fire Department. The photo at left (courtesy of <http://uptondaily.com/>) shows Conner making his presentation. After the presentation, members of the Fire Department went to the state forest to test his project in a night drill.

Assisted by his family, other Scouts, and friends, Conner spent many hours on the trails at Upton State Forest. They took GPS readings and evaluated trail conditions, determined what emergency equipment could be used on each trail, noted water holes and key access points, and removed obstacles from the trails.

That information was used to develop paper and digital maps. With the help of Assistant Scoutmaster, Mr. Leutkemeyer, digital interactive web maps were created, making reliable data available to anyone with access to the web. Using a smart phone in the state forest, you can access a link to bring up Conner's map. Even without a smart phone,

you could be located if you called for help from a regular cell phone. The 429 volunteer hours donated to the project have a value exceeding \$11,767.00. That does not count the large format printing services donated by Makepeace and Staples. It will be priceless someday to someone who is rescued by emergency personnel using Conner's maps.

Upton Fire Chief, Aaron Goodale thanked the FUSF Board for supporting the project saying, "In years past, most of our members knew the Forest very well, but not as many do today. Conner's project resolved that for us. He knows the State Forest, and is a Fire Explorer with the Department, so he is already familiar with our apparatus. The drill allowed us to test his maps first hand. Conner's project, which started as mapping, and identification of trails, and access for the Department turned into an electronic software tool that will also help us and others in the State Forest. He worked hard on his project and the results speak for themselves. We are all very proud of his accomplishments."

Upton Police Chief Michael Bradley echoed the sentiments of Chief Goodale, saying, "Conner has provided a great resource to Upton's Public Safety Departments. The detailed maps, in paper and digital format, will assist responders and incident commanders when dealing with emergencies in the Upton State Forest. I was very impressed with his presentation and the details of his work. The Upton Police Department is grateful for his work and I would like to congratulate him on the successful completion of his Eagle project."

FUSF adds our thanks and congratulations!

Here is a link to the online map.

[http://www.upton.ma.us/Pages/state%20forest%20pc/upton%20state%20forest\\_new.html](http://www.upton.ma.us/Pages/state%20forest%20pc/upton%20state%20forest_new.html).

Shown here are Upton Fire Chief Aaron Goodale; Conner Shults; DCR Park Supervisor, Val Stegemoen and Upton Police Chief, Michael Bradley.



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### **Friends of Upton State Forest Board Meetings**

Board meetings are held at the Upton Police Station meeting room at 7:00 PM.

January 20  
February 17  
March 17  
April 21

### **Save these Dates! Details in the spring newsletter.**

#### **Park Serve Day – Saturday, April 26**

Join us for this statewide annual day of service in the parks.

#### **“Stone By Stone”**

#### **Robert Thorson – Sunday, April 27**

We are planning a special daylong program presented by Robert Thorson, author of five books including three on New England’s stone walls. This will involve a morning, in-door presentation and book signing, with a hike in the afternoon at Peppercorn Hill.

#### **Annual Potluck Supper and Program Friday, May 16**

Bring a main dish or dessert to our annual potluck supper. After supper, we will enjoy a presentation by author, John J. Galluzzo as he shares his experiences while writing his book, “Half an Hour a Day Across Massachusetts.”

### **Upton Open Space Hikes Stefans Farm**

Upton Open Space Committee is planning a series of monthly hikes at Stefan’s Farm. For a schedule, questions or cancellation notices send an email to [uptonopenspaceevents@charter.net](mailto:uptonopenspaceevents@charter.net).

The first two are on January 12 and February 9. Meet at 1:00 PM at the Community Garden, near the power lines on Mechanic St.

### **National Register Hearing for Upton!**

On December 11, the Massachusetts Historic Commission held hearings on a number of nominations for the National Historic Register, including the Upton State Forest Civilian Conservation Corps Resources Historic District. Bill Taylor and Ellen Arnold of FUSF, and Jon Meagher, representing Upton Historic Commission (UHC) attended. Shary Berg, the consultant who prepared the nomination made a formal presentation before the Commission opened the floor to public comment.

As chair of the FUSF Historic Resources Committee, Ellen read a statement on behalf of FUSF saying, “The CCC is a story of hope, and a legacy of Stewardship for our public lands that needs to be told. The Headquarters building at Upton is the last remaining example of a CCC Camp headquarters building, in Massachusetts. The remaining buildings, the parade ground and the witness trees that identify the footprint of the camp provide a unique opportunity to interpret life in a CCC camp. The remaining resources under consideration tell the story of the work CCC enrollees did throughout the Commonwealth. Together they tell the story of this well-respected New Deal program and the men that helped lift our country out of the Great Depression. When you enter the site, you know that you are in a special place.”

Wendy Pearl of the DCR noted the importance of the CCC resources at USF and Jon Meagher spoke on behalf of UHC, expressing thanks to all who worked to make this happen. The Commissioners voted unanimously in favor of the nomination!

Here is a link to a Worcester Telegram article about the nomination. <http://www.telegram.com/article/20131226/NEWS/312269777/1101/local>

## **Raccoons and Wood Duck Nesting Boxes (part three)**

*By Joe Nava, FUSF member*

*(Editor's note: Joe worked at Phillips Wildlife Lab at Upton State Forest from 1948 to 1956. Since 1960, he has continued his career in Alaska.)*

As soon as we put up wood duck nesting boxes, we discovered that raccoons were getting into the boxes and eating the duck eggs. When we put the boxes on trees at the edge of the water, it was too easy for raccoons to climb the trees to enter the boxes. So we put the boxes on poles out in the water, but this did not deter them either. Raccoons can swim, and swim they did! Those clever critters would swim to the boxes, climb the poles, and eat the eggs. Once a raccoon learned to do this, it would visit every box on a pond or lake. The ducks were losing the battle.

We devised a wood duck nesting box that raccoons could not enter, putting a predator guard on the box. The first trial was a four-inch metal stovepipe sticking out in front of the hole in the wooden box. In order to test the guard we needed raccoons, so we trapped them using a steel trap with the jaws padded so no harm would come to them. I remember the first one we trapped. He sat snarling and snapping while firmly attached to the trap. I thought I could just throw my coat over him and get him into a cage. The raccoon bit right through that coat and into my thumb. "Ouch! That hurt!

We finally got the raccoon into the cage, bringing it safely to the Wildlife Lab. We built a walk-in wire cage for the raccoons to live in at the back of the Headquarters building. We cared for them and fed them well. so toward the end of the experiment they got quite used to us. I remember one that would

climb up my pants leg to reach into my pocket for the apple hidden there.

We put a wood duck nesting box with food in it on a pole in the middle of the cage. Then, we put the new metal predator guard on the front of the box. We discovered that the raccoon could not get through the metal tunnel and into the box. As I recall, the stovepipe tunnel was about 8 inches long. We were ecstatic because we had solved the problem! We began mass production of the guards, putting them on all the new boxes we built and on many of the boxes we had already erected. We relaxed that spring to let the ducks nest successfully, but we had made a mistake. We had not tested the new guards on the ducks.

There were no duck nests in the boxes with the new metal predator guards. The ducks simply did not like the metal guards and would not enter them, so we were back to square one. We decided to make the guard of wood since the ducks liked wood. We devised a square wooden tunnel four inches wide and about eight inches long. We tested this on our raccoons and found that while they could go through a round four-inch diameter hole they could not maneuver the eight-inch long wooden tunnel.

We started replacing all the metal guards with wooden ones, and that solved the problem. The ducks could now nest without any interference from the raccoons. Today, those guards are seen on nesting boxes all over Massachusetts. The guards are effective, thanks to the raccoons that helped us with this project of experimentation. We fed the raccoons well to fatten them up and released them back into the wild. I have eaten roasted raccoon, but we did not eat these worthy laboratory animals.

