

BROAD BROOK COALITION

*Dedicated to the preservation of open space **and** the promotion of affordable housing*

Volume 22, No. 2 Fall, 2010

New Trail Signs at FCLA

Recent visitors to the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area may have noticed the new wooden trail signs which are mounted on trees at the North Farms Road parking lot, the Boggy Meadow Road entrance, and at key trail junctions throughout the FCLA. The trail signs identify key destinations and distances to the dam, dock, the wildlife blind, and Cooke's Pasture, in addition to directing visitors to the Lake, the Hillside and the Marian Street trails. Previously, there weren't any signs at the parking areas, so first-time visitors were not aware that the FCLA had a

wildlife blind, a popular spot for birders and nature lovers. After leaving the parking areas, hikers will find signs with directional arrows pointing the way towards their destination at all key trail junctions. Similarly, when returning, signs direct hikers back to their respective parking areas.

The new trail signs were made by the carpentry shop participants of the Rehabilitation Program of the Hampshire County Jail, which is supervised by Wallace Hlava. The Broad Brook Coalition appreciates the support and cooperation of Sheriff Robert J. Garvey, who authorized the County jail to make the signs. This was not



From the President's desk

*Combating invasives
benefits us all*

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Walks and Talks

*Free walks help us
appreciate our
natural surroundings*

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Join BBC!

*Join now! Help
protect open space in
the Northampton area*

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Annual Meeting

*Allison Whitlock will
speak at our Annual
Meeting Nov. 7, 2010*

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the first time the County jail had helped the FCLA; some ten-years ago they made the kiosks for the North Farms Road and Cooke Avenue parking areas. The sturdy kiosks have proved to be very useful for visitors over the years; a large map of the FCLA is on display at the kiosks, plus announcements, wildlife photos taken by BBC members, and a holder for individual maps of the area.

A multi-step process was used by the Hampshire County jail to produce the signs. First, the signs, which are made from long-lasting cedar, were measured and cut to size. Then an oil-based brown stain was applied, after which the letters were routed in the wood. Finally, the letters were painted a contrasting off-yellow to increase their visibility using a special dripless enamel (contributed by the City of Northampton Office of Planning and Development). There are 38 signs at 16 different locations throughout the FCLA.

By having volunteers at the Hampshire County jail make the signs, instead of employing a private firm, the BBC saved a considerable sum of money-- some several thousand dollars. This is consistent with BBC's goal of directing membership fees and donations for new land acquisition. In 2009, the BBC contributed \$20,000 towards the purchase of new conservation land by the city, including the 100-acre Beaverbrook parcel on Route 9, near the Haydenville town line and the new 12-acre parcel off North King Street adjacent to the River Valley Market.

The Board of Directors decided to make new signs when a few of the old trail signs fell down after more than ten-years of faithful service. The old signs were made by Keith Davis and put up with the assistance of Carmen Ahern, then chair of the Trails committee. A plan to replace the old signs

began in 2008, when volunteers determined the sites where new signs should be placed. After the County jail made the signs, volunteers then put them up.

The BBC Board extends its thanks to Bob Bissell, Jim Reis, Bob Rundquist, Elissa Foreman, Bruce Hart, and Dave Herships who worked on the replacement sign program and to the Hampshire County Jail for making them.

--*Dave Herships*



Visit us online at
broadbrookcoalition.org

From the President's Desk

Invasive non-native plants are not just a problem for conservation areas. Each year Broad Brook Coalition dedicates many work days to controlling invasive non-native plants that would otherwise degrade the biological diversity of the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area (FLCA). However, biological systems do not stop at legal boundaries; harmful invasive plants spread regardless of BBC's efforts within FLCA.

Recently a local farmer found invasive plants making his hay unsalable. In order to maintain necessary income from selling his hay, he had to treat large areas of his hay fields to remove the invasive plants. That cost him money -- plus the revenue lost to not being able to harvest his usual crop of hay.

An article in the Daily Hampshire Gazette recently reported on dying maple trees in some nearby hill towns. The article prompted a letter to the editor which pointed out that vines, such as non-native bittersweet, increasingly cover many roadside trees, eventually cutting off their supply of light and strangling the trees.

Invasives usually reduce the diversity of native ecosystems, often make habitat for local wildlife less viable, and disrupt the useful productivity of natural systems.

People who live around FLCA can join BBC's commitment to protect our biological heritage in FLCA by monitoring their properties and making an effort to remove invasives. Good information is available to help in accomplishing this.

The Trustees of Reservations distributes a very useful booklet-- "A Guide to Invasive Plants in Massachusetts," by Simmons, Somers, and Weatherbee. It is available from the Mass. Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. I obtained a copy when I participated in a Trustees of Reservations' walk focused on invasives.

The University of Massachusetts Extension Service also provides useful information for landowners in a booklet titled "Invasive Plant Fact Sheet," by Ellsworth, Harrington, and Kittridge.

I urge BBC members to participate in our work days to control damaging non-native invasives at FLCA -- and to become advocates for invasive control and removal in all our neighborhoods. The New England Wild Flower Society advises us that invasives are "a major threat to native habitats worldwide." We should do our best to help correct this problem in our small corner of this wide world.

--Frank Olbris, president, BBC Board of Directors



Alison Whitlock to speak at this year's Annual Meeting

Alison Whitlock, Wildlife Research Grants Specialist at the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, will be our guest speaker at the BBC Annual Meeting on Sunday, November 7. This past summer, Alison spent two weeks in Louisiana where she served as technical specialist in the FWS Wildlife Operations Unit that sought to evaluate and mitigate the ecological consequences of the BP oil spill. Alison and her colleagues were based at Dennis Pass in Plaquemines Parish where they lived on a barge in the marshes. Each day, they would cover 50-70 miles of marsh and barrier beach on 'Vessels of Opportunity'. They recorded sightings of oiled birds, caught those they could for rehabilitation and collected dead birds. They also reported on

broken booms, the presence of oil in the water and other wildlife mortality. Alison will recount her experiences in her talk entitled, "Documenting the Effects of the Gulf Oil Spill on Birds in the Mississippi Delta."

Alison received her B.S. and M.S. degrees in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology, and her Ph.D. in Organismic and Evolutionary Biology, from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Since 1998, she has been with the USFWS Northeast Regional Office in Hadley where she presently oversees endangered species research grants to state agencies from Maine to West Virginia for the Division of Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration. On October 1, she will become the Northeast Regional Coordinator for White-nose Syndrome in bats.

Please join us for Alison's timely account of an unprecedented ecological calamity.

Walks and Talks



The Gift of Winter's Wildlife: Animal Tracking at FLCA with Molly Hale

Saturday, January 22, 2011 10 a.m.-12 noon

The best opportunity to observe wildlife often occurs in winter when animal tracks might be readily observable. Molly Hale, a wildlife habitat consultant and teacher of Ecology and Natural History, will guide us in this discovery of what animals are active at FLCA in the middle of winter, and what we can learn about their behavior.

Meet at the North Farms Road entrance to FLCA



Discovering the Eastern Forest with Robert Leverett

Saturday, November 6, 2010 10 a.m.-12 noon

Bob will be leading us in a discovery of the forest at FLCA. We'll be looking at and discussing the development of the forest and its successional past. How can we observe and identify non-charismatic species, what might or will expand their growth, and how can we evaluate the age of the forest through physical characteristics. Trees will be identified by bark and form. Bob will also explain how the Eastern Native Tree Society documents forest sites and individual trees, how trees are measured, and what statistics are gathered.

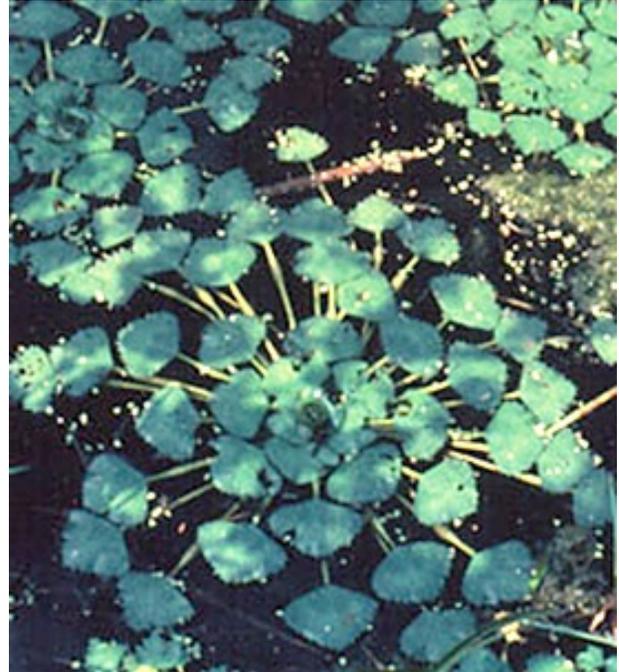
Bob is the co-founder and Executive Director of the Eastern Native Tree Society and co-founder and President of the Friends of Mohawk Trail State Forest. He is the author of the Sierra Club Guide to the Ancient Forests of the Northeast, and has co-authored works on old growth forests of the Eastern U.S. He is the principal architect of the Eastern Old Growth Conference Series.

A helpful website to prepare for this program: www.nativetreesociety.org.

Meet at the North Farms Road entrance to FLCA.

Notes from the Stewardship Committee: All About Invasives

Among the numerous projects sponsored by the Stewardship Committee this summer, most were directed toward the control of invasive plants ("invasives"). Besides the specific plant control projects described below, two staff members from the Lakes and Ponds Program of the Massachusetts Division of Conservation and Recreation led a workshop at Forbes Library in July that focused on the identification of invasive aquatic plants, a new topic for most committee members. Although we have been aware of the presence of water chestnut in Fitzgerald Lake for a number of years, the DCR team taught us how to use a simple key to recognize other non-native aquatic plant species. A survey of the lake for such invaders is in our plans for the fall. Invasive plants also took center stage in our first effort to evaluate and recommend stewardship goals for the new Beaver Brook/Broad Brook Conservation Area off Route 9 near the Haydenville boundary. In a visit to this area in August with members of the Conservation Commission and Sarah LaValley, Conservation, Preservation and Land Use Planner in the City's Office of Planning and Development, we spotted a dozen different invasive plants, shrubs or trees in the 300-yard strip between Route 9 and Beaver Brook. This fall, we will consult with land rehabilitation experts to help us draw up a plan for the future management of this area.



Our invasive plant control projects seem to mount every year as these unwanted trespassers make an ever stronger showing in our local environment.

- In late May, nine industrious volunteers pulled or dug garlic mustard, lesser celandine and multiflora rose along the path to the canoe launch.
- Last year's herbicide treatment of a small patch of black swallowwort just to the south of the FLCA by Polatin Ecological Services (PES) was judged to be quite effective owing to the small number of plants that emerged this spring. We decided that a single treatment in June was sufficient to further decimate these malingerers.
- Our annual water chestnut harvest on Fitzgerald Lake, involving eleven volunteers in a variety of kayaks and canoes, took place on two days in July and August. Though we found that proliferation of this aquatic invader at the east end of the lake was greatly reduced, we discovered a significant amount at the west end, so the battle never ends. Nonetheless, we believe that our continuing efforts over the past four years have been successful in preventing the kind of takeover by water chestnut that has occurred in a number of lakes and ponds in our region, though it is clear that regular monitoring of this plant will be necessary for many years to come.
- This summer also saw the initiation of two new control projects: spotted knapweed and glossy buckthorn on the dam and in Cooke's Pasture. Targeted herbicide spraying of knapweed by Vegetation Control Services began in June and continued in July after it became evident that the FLCA was host to brown, as well as spotted, knapweed. These two species become recognizable at slightly different times so that it is hard to treat them both in one go. Later in the summer, a relatively recent explosion of glossy buckthorn in the central and eastern portions of Cooke's Pasture was combated by a crew from PES who selectively sprayed countless individual plants with an herbicide that does not significantly affect the native grasses whose growth in these tracts we are trying to encourage. Though the presence of many dying knapweed and buckthorn plants in the affected areas is not very appealing esthetically, we are hopeful that another year or two of herbicide treatment will allow the native grasses and shrubs to out-compete these invasives.
- Finally, our efforts to control three stands of *Phragmites*, the Common Reed, in the marshy portions of the Broad Brook downstream from the dam have met with considerable success. Last year's herbicide treatment by PES brought about a very significant decrease in viable plants and residual *Phragmites* growth will be treated at least once more this fall. Although we are concerned about the extensive use of herbicides in the FLCA, most leading conservation organizations have concluded that this is the only way to make progress against the threat that invasives pose to a healthy natural environment. We look forward to the day when the native habitat has been restored and further use of these agents is minimal or unnecessary. -- Robert Zimmermann

Please Join Us!

If you're not already a member, please complete this form and return it with \$25.00 to:

Broad Brook Coalition, P.O. Box 60566, Florence, MA 01062

(all contributions to BBC are tax deductible.)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ e-mail _____

I've included an additional **tax deductible** contribution to the Land Acquisition Fund

Please do **not** include my name in any listing of contributors to Broad Brook Coalition

Broad Brook Coalition needs your help, too!

We appreciate your membership dues, but want you to know that you can contribute in other ways, too. Members and friends are needed to help carry out our goals. Please consider one or more of the following volunteer opportunities:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trail maintenance and repair | <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter editor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Invasive species removal | <input type="checkbox"/> Stewardship Committee; manages conservation area |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clerical help/mailings | <input type="checkbox"/> Land Preservation/Acquisition Committee |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer help | <input type="checkbox"/> BBC Board of Directors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writer/reporter for newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Educational/recreational program planning or leadership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising campaigns | <input type="checkbox"/> Walks and Talks |

About Us

Broad Brook Coalition (BBC) is a nonprofit, all-volunteer community organization dedicated to the preservation of open space and the promotion of affordable housing. BBC co-manages the 646-acre Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area (FLCA) in cooperation with the Northampton Conservation Commission. It organizes volunteer days for trail improvement and maintenance and invasive species removal, runs educational Walks and Talks at FLCA, raises funds for the expansion of FLCA, and monitors land conservation and affordable housing issues.

Broad Brook Coalition Board of Directors 2009 - 2010

Frank Olbris, president
Robert A. Zimmermann, vice-president
Alan Marvelli, treasurer
Robert Bissell
Bruce Hart
Dave Herships
Pat McDonagh
James Reis
Bill Williams

HELP WANTED: Volunteer Opportunities

BBC can function and accomplish its goals only with the volunteer efforts of its members. There are many different projects you can help with. Time commitments vary from a few hours a year to a few hours every month. Many tasks require no special skills, only a willingness to help.

Board Members/Board Secretary: Elections for Board members will be held at the Annual Meeting in November. Two new members will be needed this year. The Board meets monthly, and members are also involved in subcommittees and many other aspects of running our all-volunteer organization. There are nine Board members to split the work. We're especially in need of members who might be willing to serve as officers eventually. Experience as a BBC volunteer is a plus, but is not required.

We're especially in need of candidates who would be willing to serve as Secretary. The BBC Secretary takes, distributes, and keeps minutes of all Board and BBC membership meetings and performs other organizational and record-keeping tasks.

If you'd like to run, please get in touch with any member of the Nominating Committee (Alan Marvelli, Bill Williams, and Bob Zimmermann) or with Jim Reis, Volunteer Coordinator. (see below).

Publicity Coordinator: Help us get the word out! Work with Board members, event organizers, the Webmaster, and our local media to let people know about BBC events and issues. You'll need good writing skills and access to the Internet; interest in developing and maintaining connections with our local media would be a plus.

Fundraisers: We hope to be planning a fundraising campaign for a major land acquisition soon—stay tuned! We're likely to need people to work on mailings, call on local businesses, and apply for small grants. If you're interested in helping us find the funds to preserve an important piece of habitat, it's not too soon to let us know.

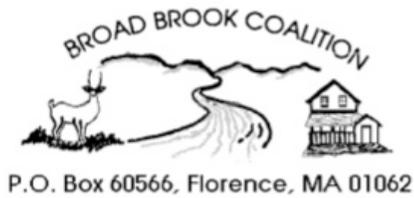
Trail Maintenance and Invasive Plant Removal: Watch for notices for volunteer days at the Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area. Get outdoors and enjoy some time with others who love FLCA.

What are your skills? If you'd like to be involved, but you don't see a task that fits your time or talents here, please talk with us!

If you're interested in helping, please get in touch with BBC's Volunteer Coordinator, Jim Reis, at 586-0567.

**Remember that hunting is permitted in certain areas of
Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area.
(See map brochure for details:
maps are available at trail head kiosks and at our website.)**

Please exercise caution at all times.



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Broad Brook Coalition
ANNUAL MEETING
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 7

Florence Civic Center
at the corner of Meadow & Park Streets
Florence, MA

Refreshments - 6:30 p.m.
Meeting - 7:00 p.m.
Speaker (Alison Whitlock) - 7:30 p.m.

Open to the public -- all are welcome.