

## Friends of Alewife Reservation (FAR) Website Collection, 1999-2019

Cambridge Historical Commission  
831 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139

Collection ID: DC001

Provenance: The Friends of the Alewife Reservation website and Ellen Mass, March 2021.

Extent: 1 flash drive containing 1,698 files and 36 folders, copied, saved, and converted into PDF, JPEG, or Word documents from the original FAR website posts.

Finding aid structure written by Emily Gonzalez, with content from Ellen Mass, April 2021.

Access: Files are available for digital viewing and research under the CHC rules of use. Please contact the CHC for more information.

### **Background Information:**

In 2020, Ellen Mass, former president of Friends of Alewife Reservation Inc. (FAR) for 15 years, contacted the Cambridge Historical Commission (CHC) via the Cambridge Room at the Cambridge Public Library with a request to permanently store files from FAR's original website as a repository for the history of the organization dating back to 1999. CHC agreed to this request after its review. In 2019, the Friends of Alewife Reservation (FAR) legally merged to become a subsidiary of Green Cambridge Inc. with a new FAR Board of Directors. With legal documents drawn up by both sides, plans were made to eventually merge the two organizational websites because of uncertainty of future goals and direction of the new organization.

Ellen Mass directed the yearlong FAR archival project working with CHC staff and with website manager, Jake Osborne, and FAR Assistants to organize and apply metadata to the website's content for CHC. This includes articles, FAR web postings, a published book, professional reports, and photographs. The file materials were harvested from the website and sent to CHC in March 2021 for purposes of digital public access by students, researchers and those interested in the regional environment of Alewife and the Alewife Reservation, and to find additional broad climate and environmental science materials still available on the original FAR website that remains in operation at the present time.

Collection Preparation Assistants:  
Jake Osborne - FAR webmaster

Holly Hutchinson - Assistant  
Oliver Sussman - Assistant

### **Organizational Structure of FAR:**

The below Executive Summary was authored by the FAR Board of Directors, 2012, and used at the request of the donor.

#### Major Goal:

FAR is a multileveled stewarding and advocacy group in the Massachusetts-owned Reservation, resting primarily on Cambridge land, but also municipal land in Belmont Arlington, and Somerville. FAR's mission has been to balance respect for wildlife habitat with walking access for all visitors. The organization has attracted the region's population with ecologically focused recreation, educational programs. It has reduced vandalism and waste, as well as provided advocacy for watershed protection. FAR's mission has been to preserve, restore and enhance natural resource functions of Cambridge's only urban wild. As a non-profit volunteer organization, FAR has reflected community outdoor needs in a dense urban demography. Its purpose has been dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the 130 acres of the Alewife Reservation through volunteer efforts and cooperation with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), formerly Metropolitan District Commission-MDC, and with local city and town officials, and partnerships with the local Mystic River Watershed Association (MYRWA). Members and advisors have included representatives of the Arlington, Belmont, and Cambridge Conservation Commissions and MYRWA, as well as neighbors, local naturalists and conservationists, strollers, teachers, businesspersons, bikers and commuters.

#### Accomplishments:

FAR work brought region-wide attention to the Reservation with its outdoor activities, news articles and publications, forums, and political advocacy. Using volunteers and funding from private and public sources, FAR has identified and inventoried wildlife with its own specialists, and with the state- sponsored "Biodiversity Days" with local schools during interpretive walks. It has participated in Mass. Riverways "Stream Team" programs to scrutinize the Little River shores and observe the Alewife Brook channel. "Biodiversity of the Alewife Reservation Area" booklet was published by FAR in 2002. The group has participated in water quality testing training with the Watershed Association, and various classrooms in the area have performed their own water quality testing curriculum. FAR has advocated for years for river and land restoration of the natural resources in the Reservation by appropriate agencies for purposes of mitigating climate change and protecting residents from flooding.

#### Needs:

The Reservation currently suffers from neglect and misuse. In the absence of defined walking paths and lack of public relations concerning the area, sensitive habitat is trampled and homeless often disregard plants and animals as they seek shelter for the night. Dumping, drinking, camping, bonfires, motor bikes and other undesirable activities result from lack of oversight and understanding of the value of the resources. Invasive species are spreading and driving out native plant species. Encroachment from neighboring development is occurring. Waterways are highly polluted because of poorly regulated stormwater discharges and runoff. Wetlands and forested areas are not fully protected under the jurisdiction of the Mass. Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The FAR historical archives give a broader history of when and how these conditions have come about and the many controversies surrounding them.

This non-profit collection of Friends of Alewife Reservation is backed by the use of the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine used by the CHC to replicate the original website and to carefully select material for this collection which are placed in common educational categories on this page.

### **Scope and Content:**

The original Archives section of the website spans a timeline of 2000-2020 when FAR was active in Cambridge, Belmont and Arlington, headquartered with offices in Cambridge at the Fresh Pond Mall from 2005-2016.

The "Sightings" blog from the website has over 100 entries from viewing visitors to the Alewife Reservation with photos and comments. The "Index" contains repeated items, but files are listed and can be accessed for fast perusal. FAR "News" has a different format from "Archives," but contains similar useful categories for the collection accessed digitally.

For more information about the reconstituted Cambridge FAR Board of Directors and their plans with Green Cambridge Inc., view and contact: [www.greencambridge.org](http://www.greencambridge.org)

### **Folder List (digitally accessible):**

This collection is divided into sixteen folders with topics which are relevant to the history of the organization and its actions over 20 years.

Each folder contains a "Preface" which describes content and a social context for its development.

Specific dates of events, articles etc. are provided in each file link's naming convention.

The present FAR website, now captured by the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine, also includes early organizational by-laws, FAR mission, directors, areas of participation, interest section for visitors to sign up, and miscellaneous materials not found in the 16 folders below.

Scrapbooks of FAR news articles will be submitted to the CHC in the summer of 2021.

### ***Activity***

*FAR Stewardship, celebration, advocacy, ecology activities with photographs and flyers included in this folder, and*

*newspaper or public relations releases.*

*48 activity files, 2 projects, 6 photos, 1 video*

### ***Advocacy***

*FAR advocacy activities for Reservation improvements are described. Environmental concerns and research and professional reports included.*

*70 advocacy files, 3 projects, 2 videos*

### ***Archives***

*Access to the original 13 years of FAR materials can be accessed through this Archival Preface with the link provided.*

*1 Archives Preface*

### ***Arts and Culture***

*Projects related to arts are visible at the Alewife T stop and at the entrance to the Alewife Reservation*

*19 articles and 6 photos with others within articles*

### ***Biography***

*Includes professional consultants, writers, photographers, monitors and FAR background*

*9 files with 1 photo, 1 logo*

### ***FAR Summer Camp***

*Covers 9 years of FAR Ecology Camp supported by city of Cambridge and other Funds and grants with daily logs and activities of campers through 2017.*

*20 files. Photos included in written materials*

### ***Education***

*A large mix of other categories highlighting the most educational events and projects.*

*63 files include videos, slide shows, project information that includes other categories listed.*

### ***History***

*Covers the organizational history and early history of the Alewife area of Northwest Cambridge.*

*18 files include edition of North Cambridge News of metropolitan planning*

### ***Information***

*Eclectic mixture of maps and reports, legal proceeding*

*46 files include maps, and minutes of Board, water quality reports, 4 photos*

### ***Miscellaneous***

*Focus on community parade to preserve the regional silver maple forest*

*42 photos Include a highly eclectic collection of photos with and without dates which captions can illuminate the reader*

### ***Newsletters***

*Newsletters were distributed by-weekly and more frequently at different times to write about the weekly events and inspiring climate change work,*

*and work of other organizations.*

*35 newsletters give a larger context for weekly FAR activity and outreach, and connection with others.*

### ***Reports***

*Major reports from professional environmental consultants are included*

*21 conservation and assessment reports*

## ***Sections Archive***

*Contains 4 of the largest sections of this Collection*

*Sightings Blog, Index, News, Archives*

## ***Sightings***

*These photos are taken from the "Sightings Blog" as special presentations for this collection.*

*11 photos of Alewife Reservation wildlife*

## ***Silver Maple Forest***

*Articles, Interviews, videos, history of the forest conservation in Cambridge and Belmont*

*47 articles, 12 videos, forums, 5 photos*

## ***Wildlife***

*Articles and special entries such as Eagle-Music video*

*20 articles, 4 photos, 1 video*

Return to CHC Collections home:

<http://www.cambridgema.gov/historic/researchaids/archivalcollections>