

Friends of Arlington's Great Meadows Annual Report for 2021

This report recaps the accomplishments of the Friends of Arlington's Great Meadows (FoAGM) in 2021 and reports on events during the year. We wish to thank everyone who has helped in one way or another with these efforts.

Stewardship Activities

Community Outreach

With the COVID-19 pandemic we have not sponsored any public outreach events this year. We have however encouraged people to take walks on their own while following appropriate safety precautions.

The Excel Nursing Home off Bryant and Emerson Gardens Road closed in the spring of 2019. A town house development was approved by the Lexington Planning Board and is now under construction. Because of the construction there has been no public access to AGM at this popular location. When the project is completed in 2022 there will be some new public parking and an emergency vehicle and public access path to AGM at this location.

New Website

We started work on a new AGM website in 2020 and after some delays expect to have it up and running in 2022. We will use the same internet URL address for access.

Maintenance

This was the seventh year since the ACROSS Lexington paths were extended into East Lexington and included parts of AGM. The C loop connects AGM with the Arlington Reservoir, and the D loop connects north to the Whipple Hill Conservation area. The new signage makes navigation much easier, and more people are discovering these open space areas and their connections. In 2021 new navigation maps were installed at many trail junctions.

We supervised two AHS students doing some of their required volunteer hours in the AGM, cutting oriental bittersweet vines, for at least 10 hours each. In 2021 they concentrated on cutting the thickest vines visible from the bike path and the trails from Brandon St. clockwise around the wetlands to the Lily Pond boardwalk.

We continued with regular trail and kiosk maintenance. The boardwalks built in 2005 have been showing some signs of age with decaying treads. This May scouts from Arlington Scout Troop 313 replaced many rotting boards in Arlington's Great Meadows Finger Marsh and Lily Pond boardwalks



Upland Meadow Restoration

In 2010, we undertook a project to restore the upland “entry meadow” at the northwest corner of AGM, which had been rapidly reverting to woodland, to its historical open condition. To maintain this lovely meadow, we have established an annual mowing program in the fall to avoid interference with nesting birds and to minimize the impact on wildflowers. That mowing did not happen in 2020 because access was temporarily blocked by construction work on the former nursing home site. Inspired in part by the restoration work at the adjacent Joyce Miller’s Meadows, we are now considering extending this restoration effort to an adjacent area where woodcocks have nested in the past.

Invasive Plant Control

We continued our efforts started in 2005 to clear and maintain a stretch along the Minutemen Bikeway that had become densely overgrown with the invasive Japanese Knotweed plant. Permanent eradication of this invasive is extremely difficult, particularly without the use of herbicides. However, over the last ten years, with volunteer labor and purely mechanical means, we have succeeded in keeping this area mostly knotweed-free and preserving a stunning view of the Meadows from the bikeway. We especially thank Greg Shenstone and others for the recent efforts.

Financial

Donations to FoAGM in 2021 were about the same as 2020. Reported expenses were for boardwalk repair work materials. They do not include the upland meadow mowing costs as there was no access because of the construction work at the former nursing home site. We continue to hold healthy cash balances and plan to apply them to the proposed upland meadow expansion project. All our income was from the generosity of individual donors and private foundations, and was not dependent on municipal budgets, corporate funding, or fundraising events. FoAGM also continues its successful partnership with the Arlington Land Trust (ALT) as fiscal agent.

Summary of activity in FoAGM's fund balances as of the end of 2021:

2020 Income

\$ 2,757.00 from over a dozen donations.

2020 Expenses

\$ 519.92 Total Expenses (for boardwalk repair materials).

Fund Balance as of December 31

\$ 22,374.83 FoAGM fund balance at beginning of the year

+\$ 2,237.06 Net change

\$ 24,611.89 FoAGM fund balance at the end of 2021

We thank our new and trustworthy regular donors who have contributed to the preservation of one of the largest natural open spaces in the Arlington/Lexington region. Those wishing to make a tax-deductible donation can make a check out to "ALT FoAGM Fund" and mail it to FoAGM, Box 492, Arlington, MA 02476. Or use a credit card online at <https://arlingtonlandtrust.org/join-donate/> by selecting the Great Meadows Fund category.

Mike Tabaczynski, Financial Officer

Friends of Arlington's Great Meadows Steering Committee

David White, Chair

Gordon Jones

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Sandra Ruggiero

Mike Tabaczynski

Jeanette Voss

Lorelle Yee

If you would like to help out or just want more information, please contact us at:

Email: info@FoAGM.org

Website: www.FoAGM.org

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