



Celebrating our 40th Anniversary!

the Newton Conservators

NEWSLETTER

Fall Issue

www.newtonconservators.org

September 2001

Campaign to Pass CPA Moves into Full Swing

***Kick-off Rally Scheduled for Saturday, September 15 at War Memorial Auditorium, City Hall
Donations Urgently Needed to Fund Direct Mail and Other Campaign Costs***

After a Summer of preparation, the campaign to get the Community Preservation Act approved by the voters on Election Day will begin in earnest on September 15. At 3:30 PM on that Saturday afternoon, the campaign for passage of the referendum will officially begin with a rally at City Hall.

According to Josephine McNeil, who is spearheading rally plans for the Newton CPA Alliance, of which the Conservators are a part, a variety of speakers will describe the importance of the CPA to Newton. Supporters can also pick up flyers, signs, bumper stickers, Dear Friend cards and other materials that can be used in helping to make Newton a CPA city.

McNeil, who is executive director of Can-Do, an affordable housing agency in Newton, said "passage of CPA will not be automatic. The biggest thing we have to do is educate people so they will understand how CPA benefits all of us. This rally is the first step."

The Community Preservation Alliance is also planning other initiatives designed to help achieve passage of the referendum. Among other things, the group is working on a mailing to all households and a series of forums that will provide information to voters. Individuals are encouraged to get groups of neighbors or friends together and groups are urged

(Continued on page 2)

Board of Aldermen Consider Size and Make-up of Community Preservation Committee

In two meetings, one in June and another on September 5th, the Programs and Services Committee of the Board of Aldermen met to discuss the form of the Community Preservation Committee (CPC). This local committee will be required, if the CPA is adopted in November, to consider options and to make recommendations to the Board of Aldermen regarding expenditure of CPA funds.

Five members of the CPC are mandated by state law. One member will be selected from each of five existing city commissions: the Conservation Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, Housing Authority and the Planning and Development Board. Up to four additional members can be added for a committee total of nine.

The CP Alliance has recommended that four additional members be appointed, one each representing the four purposes for which CPA funds can be spent. The Alliance further recommended that, to the extent possible, members of the committee should possess additional expertise in

(Continued on page 2)

(CPA Campaign, continued from page 1)

to convene meetings for the purpose of discussing the pros and cons of CPA so that voters are aware of the law before stepping into the booth on Election Day.

Fundraising efforts are continuing in an effort to raise the money needed to cover campaign costs. Jim Broderick, chairman of Alliance and member of the Newton Conservators board of directors, indicates the need for funds. "We have had a number of generous donations of in-kind services, for which we are very grateful. But not all services can be donated and in those cases, there is just no substitute for money that can be used to cover necessary expenses."

Donations can be sent to Newton CPA, c/o Larry Burdick, treasurer, 21 Groveland Street, Newton, MA 02466.

Opposition to the CPA is coming principally from the Newton Taxpayers Association. They argue that, while the purposes to which CPA funds would be directed are worthwhile, taxpayers should not be required to cover the costs of these programs. They refer to the CPA as "forced charity," suggesting that protection of open space and other CPA programs are not the mission of the city or our community as a whole to accomplish. Overlooked in that analysis is the fact that without the use of city funds, none of the several hundred acres of parks and conservation land preserved over the past 40 years at the urging of the Conservators would have been saved. Programs that benefit the entire community can be accomplished fairly only through broad-based assessments that express the collective commitment of residents.

The CPA would be funded by a 1% surcharge on property tax bills (about \$50 for the average Newton house valued at \$450,000) and a state match of up to 100% of local money raised. In 2001, we estimate that about \$3 million would be raised if the CPA is passed in November.

By Doug Dickson

Two excellent pamphlets are now available from the Land Trust Alliance:

"Conservation Options for Private Landowners" and "Protecting Your Land with a Conservation Easement"

To receive a copy, please send your name and street address to Lucy Stair at 617-928-3375 or at longwood@mediaone.net.

The Newton Conservators Newsletter© is published five times each year by the Newton Conservators, Inc. Issues usually appear in February, April, June, September and November. Deadlines for these issues are the fifth of each month in which an issue is scheduled to be published.

We welcome material related to our mission from any source. Send proposed articles by email in MS Word or rich text format to ddickson@mediaone.net. Digitized photographs, maps and diagrams are also welcome.

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Thanks to the following contributors to this edition of the Newsletter: Rep. Ruth Balser, Larry Burdick, Doug Dickson, Bill Hagar, Dan Perlman, Eric Reenstierna, Lucy Caldwell Stair, Brian Yates

(CP Committee, continued from page 1)

real estate, finance, architecture or the law. We also suggested that these members be appointed by the mayor and approved by the Board of Aldermen for staggered three-year terms, bringing this committee into line with the procedure for appointment of most city boards and commissions.

Our reasoning in making this recommendation is that the CPC should above all be balanced so that each of the four interests will have a fair shot at having their projects considered and to avoid efforts to stack the committee. This would be achieved by having a community representative and a city commission representative aligned with each of the CPA funding categories. The Planning and Development Board representative would contribute a broader community perspective.

The structure of the CPC will need to be finalized and passed as a city ordinance by the Board of Aldermen. Members of the Board would like to complete that task in advance of the November election so voters will know how the process is expected to work when they vote.

To that end, the Programs and Services Committee will take up the topic when they meet again on Wednesday, September 19 in Room 222 at City Hall. If agreement is reached at that time, the matter could be taken up at the next meeting of the full Board of Aldermen on Monday, October 1st. Both meetings are open to interested members of the community.

By Doug Dickson

President's Letter

Dear Conservators,

Clear fall days find us at work on our agenda for this year. By informal consensus, we are concentrating on three key areas that fit squarely within our mission as advocates and stewards of open space.

Get Newton to adopt the CPA

First of all, we want to get the Community Preservation Act adopted in Newton, a mechanism for saving open space before it's all goggled up. With its state match and minimal cost (about \$56.00 per year per household on average), we are saying that, "The CPA too good a deal to pass up."

How you can help:

1. Vote YES at the polls on November 6 and encourage your friends and neighbors to do the same.
2. Educating voters is key. Talk up the CPA and make a donation to help the CPA Alliance pay for postage to mail out educational flyers. Mail your check, made out to Newton Community Preservation Alliance, to Larry Burdick, treasurer, 21 Groveland Street, Newton, 02466.

Be an active land trust

Second, we see the need to offer our land trust capabilities to Newton landowners. Years ago, we were given Ordway Park to preserve and maintain. Now, we seek other parcels, by holding conservation restrictions or full title. In this way, landowners can preserve their land and enjoy considerable economic benefits: income tax deductions, property tax reductions, increased value of adjoining property, and estate tax advantages. Using the right tools, properties of conservation value can be preserved even while the landowner continues to live on the property.

How you can help:

If you are interested in finding out more or if you can help us identify and talk with potential landowners in Newton, contact Eric Reenstierna at 617-969-5820 or 617-577-0096 or ericreen@tiac.net.

Expand and distribute map guides

Third, we're revising our map guides. The City has been unable to produce up-to-date detailed maps of the 25 major parks and conservation areas, so we will fill this gap. This new edition will include professionally rendered maps, and new trails such as the gorgeous long trail that goes all the way from Nahanton Park along the Charles to Boston's new Millennium Park.

We plan to give the map to members and sell it to others as a way to introduce them to these sometimes hidden spots. We hope that they, too, will come to treasure these areas.

How you can help:

We need people to get the map guide into Newton stores. We have ideas and contacts, and now we need volunteers who can make the arrangements. Contact me at 617-928-3375 or longwood@mediaone.net.

Sincerely,

Lucy Caldwell Stair

MISSION Newton Conservators, Inc.

The Newton Conservators promote the protection and preservation of natural areas, including parks, playgrounds, forests and streams, which are open or may be converted to open space for the enjoyment and benefit of the people of Newton. It further aims to disseminate information about these and other environmental matters.

A primary goal is to foster the acquisition of land, buildings and other facilities to be used for the encouragement of scientific, educational, recreational, literary and other public pursuits that will promote good citizenship and the general welfare of the people of our community.

The Newton Conservators was formed as a not-for-profit organization 40 years ago in June 1961.

Conservation Commission Report

The Conservation Commission, with new leadership this year, has had a hand in changes at many of the city's open spaces and at streamside locations protected under the Rivers Act.

Rivers and Streams

The Rivers Act, sponsored by Mayor David Cohen when he was a state legislator, has become a useful means for protection of streamside land. It has resulted, as well, in an increase in the number of cases that come before the Conservation Commission. The Rivers Act gives the Commission jurisdiction over land within 200 feet of a perennial stream or river. Because Newton for the most part is already developed, little land remains for the Commission to protect in a truly "natural" state. However, the Act has allowed the Commission to obtain agreements for the naturalization of the riverfront margins of various parcels along the Cheese Cake Brook, Saw Mill Brook, and Laundry Brook. Parcel by parcel, agreements are made. Over time, these agreements promise to create continuous natural corridors that will enhance the lands of their owners, improve water quality, and provide significant wildlife habitat.

The Commission has jurisdiction in those cases in which owners seek development approval. The Commission encourages all owners, including those without current development plans, to naturalize their streamside lands. Before making changes in the sensitive streamside margin, owners should consult with Martha Horn, the city's Senior Environmental Planner, who can provide advice concerning plantings and regulations.

Hammond Pond

Hammond Pond is at a turning point that holds the promise of dramatic improvement. The pond suffers from siltation from runoff from the adjacent mall parking lot and Route 9. It suffers from algae blooms caused largely by bird droppings (themselves caused in part by feeding of the birds, by humans). Representative Ruth Balsler, the Conservators' Environmentalist of the Year, has convened a working group of experts and volunteers that has addressed these problems. Plans call for installation of a system of silt traps to filter

runoff at the parking lot edge, before water enters the pond.

A grant application was filed this summer for funds from the state through a new lakes and ponds demonstration program to pay for these improvements. The city is currently awaiting word of the outcome of this application.

Hammond Pond is bordered on the south by the parking lot (which provides excellent access and views) and on the west and north by MDC conservation land. It is bordered on the east by high, wooded ground, with a scattering of large houses set back from the pond edge. Much of the land has been under the stewardship of its owner, CHP Inc. CHP recently entered into an agreement that generously provides protection for a large stand of mature copper beeches and that extends conservation easements adjacent to the wetland for one parcel at the north end of the pond shore. Alderman Lisle Baker has been instrumental in working with CHP and another nearby owner who also has granted a conservation easement.

CHP has sold some of its holdings on the pond shore. The progress of one of these through the process of approval for development provides a good demonstration of the limitation of regulatory action as the sole means for protection of important open space.

The pond-front parcel nearest the Chestnut Hill Theater parking lot was subdivided, and a new, one-acre pond-front house lot was created. A proposal was brought before the Conservation Commission that called for development of a house near the pond shore. The proposed location was well within the 100 foot buffer of the wetland where the Conservation Commission has jurisdiction.

The Commission can impose conditions within the 100 foot buffer, but only those conditions that are necessary for the protection of the wetland itself. (If the Commission denies a proposal that meets technical requirements for wetland protection, the denial is at risk of reversal on appeal at the state level, by the DEP.) The owners' engineers were able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of a majority of the Commission that the house could be developed without damage to the nearby wetland. The plan was approved.

Several other house lots on the pond's eastern shore are in a similar position. There is now the

(Continued on page 5)

(Conservation Commission, continued from page 4)

prospect of a series of large houses different in their placement from the set-back locations of the existing older dwellings.

The City and land trusts like the Conservators to date have not had the financial resources to consider acquisitions of land of this kind, as waterfront prices now exceed \$1 million per lot. An alternative may be to work with owners to explore the potential of lower-cost acquisitions of conservation easements, to protect the most sensitive land nearest the pond.

Service

Richard Staley resigned from the Conservation Commission after many years as its Chairman. Dick had previously received the Conservators' Environmentalist of the Year Award and at our May meeting was given a Directors Award for distinguished service. Dick is replaced on the Commission by Susan Lunin, whose background, like Dick's, is as a science teacher. Ira Wallach is the new Chairman. Rachel Freed is the new Vice Chair. Many of the Commission members support the Community Preservation Act or have otherwise taken an active role.

With the hot housing market, the city's Senior Environmental Planner, Martha Horn, has been busy with a high volume of proposals for additions and new construction that require Commission rulings. Martha provides preliminary advice to prospective homeowners interested in whether their plans are likely to meet approval in an often lengthy regulatory process. Her advice is crucial in helping to steer owners away from proposals that are not likely to meet standards so that, when proposals do reach the Commission, they are in an acceptable form. Martha has extensive knowledge of sensitive lands on a parcel-by-parcel and owner-by-owner basis. Apart from her daily work with owners and others, she has been involved in plans for trail work and other upgrades at Dolan Pond and the city's newest open space, Flowed Meadow.

By Eric Reenstierna

Help Save Our Last Open Spaces

Newton needs your help. Our city's Open Space Plan identifies more than 200 acres that are important open spaces but that are still in private

hands. Over the last several years, because of a lack of funds, the city has been able to acquire less than an acre a year of open space. Meanwhile, the city loses several acres a year to new development. It won't be long before much of what we think of as "our" open space is gone.

The Conservators have stepped up to serve as Newton's land trust. The Conservators seek to protect land not only through acquisition. We seek protection of land that supports abundant wildlife adjacent to wetlands. We seek conservation easements on the fragile margins of pond shores. Our largest project is to protect a 45-acre brook-side holding. Smaller projects create "pocket parks" or preserve hilltop vistas.

You can help us secure a place for wildlife for the future economic and environmental health of our community. Funds are needed for the work of the Conservators. Your contribution is important, whatever form it takes.

- You may want to help secure a particular parcel. Contact us, and we would be glad to discuss the possibilities.
- You may be the owner of a parcel that you wish to see protected. We can advise you.
- You may want to send some part of the tax rebate you recently received. Contributions to the Conservators are tax deductible.

Your help makes it possible to conserve our land. Help us make Newton rich in open space.

By Eric Reenstierna



Brief Updates

News of interest from various sources

MDC Parks

Secretary of State William Galvin has passed a motion in the Mass. Historic Commission to begin the process of putting the Metropolitan Park System on the National Register of Historic Places.

Brian Yates

Hemlock Gorge

A second lot of ladybugs was released into Hemlock Gorge Reservation in mid-June, completing the planned release of 10,000 adelgid predators funded by the state legislature last year. We will keep everyone apprised of the state of the trees. Forester Charles Burnham expects to have an assessment of the effect of the ladybug release by Spring 2002.

The first lot was released in early May. The insects, black, tiny, but seeminly full of energy, were grown for us in New Jersey. They were gently released with the aid of artists' brushes into the lower branches of a large adelgid-infested tree on the Needham side of the reservation, opposite the Devil's Den. The event was covered by WBZ news, whose report and interview with Site Supervisor Kevin Hollenbeck, was broadcast on the Channel 4 evening news.

*From Friends of Hemlock Gorge web site
www.channel1.com/users/hemlock*

The Residences on Route 9

This residential development in Chestnut Hill near the Atrium Mall is proceeding following removal of hazardous waste related to the Jenny gas station over previous years. The Newton Conservators, represented by Larry Burdick, sits on the Community Liaison Committee to monitor this project.

Route 9 (and potentially Florence St.) could be a problem within the next month as the contractor installs a new 16" water line (supplied by the city). The committee will also be researching issues related to the Special Permit Board Orders as we get closer to occupancy (first unit around December 1).

Larry Burdick

Dolan Pond

Dolan Pond is slated to receive \$150,000 in FY 2002 Federal Community Development Block

Grant Funds to upgrade signage at the three major entrances, add handicapped parking at the Webster Park entrance, install boardwalks in the swampy area, hard paths in other areas, and nature overlooks.

Proposals were reviewed over the summer and construction could begin as early as this fall.

*From Friends of Dolan Pond web site
www.dolanpond.org*

(Continued on page 7)

Save the Date

Conservators Set Date for Fall Lecture at Library

*Thursday, November 29, 2001 – 7:00 PM
Druker Auditorium, Newton Free Library*

Dan Perlman
Conservation Biologist

Presents

From Cold Spring Park to Planet Earth: Human Impacts across the Landscape

Have you been to Cold Spring Park? Do you live on the planet Earth? See them both in a whole new light with biologist and photographer Dan Perlman of Newton.

Dan will discuss a wide range of human impacts at both the local and global levels. On the local level, he will describe the history of the Cold Spring Park area since Newton was settled by Europeans. This part of the talk will be illustrated with maps, aerial photographs, and photographs Dan has been taking in the park for the past 18 months.

Throughout that time period, he has photographed the same scene twice every month, creating a powerful teaching and learning tool that he has shared with students in many of Newton's public schools.

For the discussion of global impacts, Dan will use materials from Conserving Earth's Biodiversity, a multimedia CD-ROM that he and Harvard biologist E. O. Wilson co-developed. Dan taught conservation biology at Harvard for nine years, where he won the Phi Beta Kappa Excellence in Teaching Award. He has just joined the biology faculty at Brandeis University. Over the past half dozen years, Dan has also offered science programs in nearly all of the Newton Public Schools.

(Brief Updates, continued from page)

No Net Loss Bill

Activity has stepped up in support of S1109, formerly referred to as the "no net loss bill" and recently re-named the Public Lands Preservation Bill. Many of the state-wide environmental organizations (Sierra Club, Mass. Audubon, Environmental League of Massachusetts) as well as MASSPIRG have made passage of S1109 their top legislative priority for the term. The groups held press conferences and a lobby day at the State House this summer in order to put the bill on the Legislature's radar screen. Also, MASSPIRG has been publicizing S1109 in its door-to-door canvassing campaign this summer. It has been urging people to contact their legislators to support the bill. As a result of these efforts, the bill is gaining support. The bill requires the replacement of any publicly protected land that is used for development. Passage of the bill is the next logical step after last term's the Community Preservation Act victory. With municipalities now having a mechanism for raising funds to acquire open space, it becomes particularly important to ensure that the land is protected in perpetuity.

Rep. Ruth Balsler

The Terraces at Andover Newton

Over the summer, the developer seeking approval to construct 48 homes on the south side of Institution Hill, the campus of Andover Newton Theological School, withdrew its application for a special permit. In August, The Terraces LLC submitted a scaled-down plan that reduced the size of the units, pulled them back from the perimeter of the property and made other changes in response to community pressure. This is the fourth time the developer has reconfigured the proposal. The Conservators have commented on several aspects of the plan in the past, including density and impact on open space, siting of structures, loss of trees, drainage and preservation of nearby wetland water levels, maintenance of pedestrian to the top of the hill and most importantly, preservation of the view from Institution Hill. The latest proposal was scheduled for hearing before the Land Use Committee of the Board of Aldermen on Tuesday, September 11th.

Doug Dickson

Edmands Park

The MWRA has been reconstructing the water main along Colby Path this spring and summer, creating quite a mess. They cleaned up the area around the Boston College soccer field for the first game of the season and dumped concrete barriers and dirt along Colby Path. There was already a great deal of debris and mess from the heavy rains early in the season, which washed out some paths. While the work continues, there isn't much that can be done to alleviate the mess. A preliminary plan was created by landscape architect paid for by Boston College as part of their agreement with the community at the time the soccer field was installed. Further development of this plan for full restoration of the park along with fundraising to pay for it will become priorities when the MWRA completes its work this winter.

From information provided by Sheila Decter



View of Cold Spring Park in winter, part of a series of photos Dan Perlman will use to illustrate his lecture on November 28 at the Newton Free Library. See page 6 for details.

Grants Awarded by Newton Conservators in 2001

The Board of the Newton Conservators approved five grants to fund special projects in the Newton Public Schools this year. Below are summaries of these projects.

Applications for 2002 grants will be accepted this fall. For more information, contact Bill Hagar, chair of the Grants Committee at 617-964-2644 or william.hagar@umb.edu.

Bowen School Community Garden

This program involves the development of a garden linked to education programs in the Bowen School. An extension of classroom science projects, it ranges from paper cups and seeds (indoors) to an authentic outdoor garden environment. Students in first grade planted seeds during the spring and followed the growth of vegetables during the summer to the visualization of their products during the fall. Students will sell their harvest as part of mathematics class and/or donate the harvest to the Newton Center Food Bank. As a last task during the winter, the now second grade students will prepare the soil for the following spring. Students will learn about the cycle of growth, decay and renewal as part of their hands on experience. Organic gardening and water conservation are two very important themes of this project.

Day Middle School

From Cheesecake Brook to Stellwagen Bank

It is precisely this type of environmental monitoring and science education program that makes students and residents aware of possible environmental problems and provides an understanding of the scientific process. The project was centered on teaching a group of 80 eighth-grade students about the importance of water quality and what it means to them as consumers and citizens of Newton. Teachers took groups of students out in canoes to collect water samples from various sites on the Charles River. After training this initial cadre of students in water quality analysis, the newly educated students trained other students, thereby amplifying the initial efforts. Using test kits borrowed from the Charles River Watershed Association, they measured the key indicators of

water quality. The entire project trained students in water quality analysis procedures, the use of technology for analysis and information access on the Internet.

Butterfly Garden at Horace Mann School

This project expanded an existing garden area, planned by former students, into a butterfly garden. Teachers integrated this real world experience into their curriculum. Although the project involved the second grade, all of the students took some role in developing and maintaining the garden. In the first phase, students planned the garden, followed by actual planting and garden maintenance. The goal of the project was to expand the existing curriculum by bringing the indoor learning experience to the real world. Students learned environmental awareness, plant growth, cycles in nature, and working together as a learning community.

Lincoln Eliot Worm Cafe

This program involved the development of a worm garden linked to organic recycling. Students learned about the cycle of growth, decay and renewal as part of their hands-on experience. Students placed daily garbage (organic waste) into a worm-composting bin and monitored the success of red worms in composting the organic waste. Students collected data on how much garbage was recycled by the worms and discussed how this information might be applied on a larger scale. In addition to the worm composting, students also planted marigold seeds in different soil mixtures around the school, including soil from the worm compost. This gave students information on the best types of soil for these flowers to grow.

Friends of Nahanton Park

Science Day Fun in an Outdoor Classroom

Binoculars, compasses, and fishing were purchased for environmental education projects centered in and around Nahanton Park. These materials will be used for students to better study the interactions of flora and fauna in this preserved environment. Topics studied will include bird watching and identification, catching and releasing fish from the Charles River, observing flora and fauna, and learning how to use a compass to travel in the woods.

By Bill Hagar

Volunteer Opportunities

Guided Tours Coordinator

Here's a great way to get to know the many beautiful natural places in Newton, from hidden trails and panoramic views to unique geology and hidden woodland gardens.

We need a person to organize a series of one-hour weekend, guided walking tours through Newton's many beautiful and historic conservation areas. You will work with others who are experienced with locating local experts who can be guides, publicizing the walks to the membership and the community. We already have a lot of ideas for themes, people, and publicity. We just need someone to take charge and coordinate.

People who have volunteered in this role in the past call it "the most fun job in the Newton Conservators." For more information, contact Judy Hepburn at 617-964-1137 or hepburnj@bc.edu.

Distribute Trails & Green Space Guide

Help us distribute the new, enlarged edition of our Trails and Green Space Guide, featuring maps of over 40 conservation areas in Newton. (Members receive a free copy of the Guide.)

You will contact realtors and sports shops and arrange for bulk sales of the Guide. This effort is important because it helps us recoup our costs and introduces more people to the special places in Newton that we want to preserve.

If you can work on this project this fall, please contact Lucy Caldwell Stair at 617-928-3375 or longwood@mediaone.net.

EVENTS CALENDAR

Saturday, September 15, 3:30 PM
War Memorial Auditorium, Newton City Hall
Kick-off Rally for Passage of CPA

Tuesday, September 18, 7:00 PM
Parish of St. Paul, Newton Highlands
"Carry In, Carry Out at Home and Work"
An examination of over-consumption
Sponsored by the Boston Chapter of AMC

Sunday afternoon, October 14
Newton Centre Green
Harvest Fair
Volunteer for the CPA and Newton Conservators' tables, providing timely information for voters and prospective members (contact Lucy Stair, 928-3375)

Thursday, October 18
Hyde Community Center, Newton Highlands
Candidates Forum
Come learn the candidates' position on CPA, open space, and other environmental issues

Thursday, November 1, 7:00-9:00 PM
Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary, Natick
Landscaping for Aesthetics and the Environment
Thomas Wirth (Victory Garden) and a panel from the Ecological Landscaping Association
\$12 at the door

Tuesday, November 6, 7:00 AM to 8 PM
Election Day
Get out the vote for passage of CPA

Thursday, November 29, 7:00-9:00 PM
Druker Auditorium, Newton Free Library
From Cold Spring Park to Planet Earth
Dan Perlman, Brandeis University biologist
Newton Conservators fall lecture

IN THIS ISSUE:

- CPA Campaign Moves into Full Swing page 1
- Community Preservation Committee page 1
- President's Letter page 3
- Conservation Commission Report page 4
- Help Save Our Last Open Spaces page 5
- News Briefs page 6
- Fall Lecture with Dan Perlman page 7
- 2001 Grants Program page 8
- Events Calendar page 9

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