

Hello Friends!

Winter greetings from the Blue Hills!

As the snow begins to fall, I'm reflecting on the incredible energy that lit up our **Annual Meeting** at Milton Academy. Members gathered not just to escape the cold but to celebrate a year of progress toward our shared mission: fostering a deep sense of belonging in the Blue Hills and building a legacy of stewardship for generations to come.

A highlight of the evening was the keynote from **DCR Ecologist Ian Kinahan**, who shared year-one findings from the Houghton Hill post-fire impact study. His insights into how forest fires shape New England's plant and animal communities underscored the power of science-driven stewardship. Your support launched this study in 2025 and will sustain it into 2026.

Other 2025 highlights included:

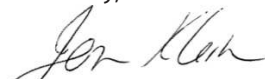
- 26 trail projects completed in 586 hours by 266 dedicated volunteers.
- Engaging programs that introduced 300+ young people to the wonders of nature.
- Expanded public programs designed to welcome more people into the park.
- Measurable impact of long-term advocacy for sustainable, equitable transit access so everyone can experience the Blue Hills (see page 3 for more on this).

We were proud to honor several outstanding contributors: volunteers **Marie Cummins** and **Ruth Bigio**; community partner **Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition** (Kay Savage and Kahlil Cooper from MFFC shown above with Board President Mike Paglia and me); corporate partner **Orchard Cove**; and board member **Mike Albert**. Their leadership reflects the inclusive, people-powered stewardship at the heart of the FBH mission.

As we look toward 2026, we're excited to expand guided hikes, create new volunteer opportunities, and continue fostering a vibrant community of caretakers.

Thank you for being part of the FBH family. Wishing you a winter filled with crisp air, snowy adventures, and peaceful moments in the Blue Hills.

Warmly,


Jen Klein, PhD
Executive Director

"Your membership fuels the work. It funds trail markers, equips clean-up crews, and strengthens advocacy efforts that protect this remarkable landscape. The enthusiasm in the Straus Library was a powerful reminder of how much the Blue Hills means to all of us."

Background photo: 2024 Solstice Sunrise Hike

A hand in a blue and white checkered shirt points to a specific trail intersection on a detailed map of the Blue Hills Reservation. The map shows various trails, roads, and landmarks like Neughton's Pond. A semi-transparent blue box with white text is overlaid on the left side of the map.

A Guide to Getting Around the Blue Hills

Have you ever been moving along a trail in the Blue Hills Reservation and wondered how to interpret those white wooden signs posted on select trees where trails intersect? Well, wonder no more!

They're part of a clever navigation system designed to make exploring the Blue Hills easier and safer.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) uses a numbered trail intersection system to help you identify your exact location on the trail map, regardless of the path you took to get where you are.

Check out our blog for how it works and what you can learn by following the numbers. If you're ever in the park and notice one of these important markers is missing, let us know and we'll work with DCR to take care of it.

Taking on Bittersweet This Fall

by John Harrell, Volunteer and Education Program Manager

Climbing bittersweet may have pretty berries, but it's no boon to the Blue Hills. Introduced as an ornamental plant, it can bring down native plants, block sunlight, and reduce biodiversity.

Management is best done in late summer through fall, using some best practices. One is to cut the stem about five feet from the ground and then cut it again at the base (see far right). If you don't leave enough of a gap, the vine can grow back together and continue spreading.

This year, two FBH stewardship events were devoted to the bittersweet problem. Thank you to the volunteers and The Education Cooperative High School students who joined in.



Photo: MassAudubon



Look What You Made Happen!

This year, your commitment to the Blue Hills helped bring the FBH mission to life. Thanks to your support, our vision of fostering connection and belonging for all became reality through the MBTA's Houghton's Pond bus pilot program.

From June through October, the 716 bus added Saturday stops at Houghton's Pond, giving hundreds of visitors — many relying on public transit — easy access to the heart of the Reservation. It was more than transportation; it was a meaningful step toward making the Blue Hills welcoming and accessible to everyone.

This victory grew from years of community-driven advocacy and your belief that access and equity matter. If you're passionate about shaping the next success, **join the FBH Advocacy Committee** and help us continue building a more inclusive future for the Blue Hills.



2026 Widowwalker Hikes Are Here!

How amazing was the Widowwalker hike series in 2025? It was so special that we're adding three more hikes to the series for 2026. We're also excited to welcome **Sun and Ski Sports** in Pembroke as our new raffle partner. So get ready for even more fun on trail and at Widowmaker Brewing afterwards!

Each hike in 2025 showcased something memorable, from snowy hiking routes to a rare copperhead sighting as well as hiking in costume up to Eliot Tower. New themes for 2026 include hikes celebrating Pride, featuring photography, and involving a scavenger hunt.

Be sure to sign up early. For safety reasons, hikes are capped at 35 participants, and spots fill up fast! You can sign up now on the FBH online calendar!



Photo by Linda Ofria of Dedham



Welcome New Friends!

Please join us in giving a warm welcome to the newest members of the Blue Hills community! Even as winter settles in, your support helps ensure that the Blue Hills Reservation is cared for and can be enjoyed in every season — today and for generations to come.

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Please use my gift to care for the trails, protect habitats, and support native species so that everyone can experience, learn from, and belong in the Blue Hills for generations to come.

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