Project Name: Arlington’s Great Meadows Boardwalks

Organization: Friends of Arlington’s Great Meadows (FoAGM) in cooperation with the Arlington Land Trust (ALT)

Brief organizational overview:
The Friends of Arlington's Great Meadows is an unincorporated association of Arlington and Lexington residents committed to the preservation of Great Meadows as natural open space through public education and stewardship. Serving as a fiscal sponsor to FoAGM, the Arlington Land Trust is a community-based nonprofit organization established in 2000 to protect undeveloped land in Arlington. The project leader, Mike Tabaczynski, vice president of the Greater Boston chapter of the New England Mountain Bike Association, is actively involved in several local and regional conservation organizations. He is well trained in trail design and construction, and has extensive experience leading projects at Massachusetts state parks, Lynn Woods Reservation, Middlesex Fells, and Lexington conservation land, which made use of a Greenways Grant he acquired in 2002 in conjunction with the Lexington Bicycle Advisory Committee.

Contact Person: Mike Tabaczynski, FoAGM Steering Committee
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Telephone: 781-861-1537 Email: mjt1@rcn.com

Project Location: Lexington, MA

Grant Amount requested: $11,316 Total Project Value: $16,016

The proposed trail project will serve: Non-Motorized users

Previously applied for Recreational Trails funding: No

Three sentence description of the proposed project:
As part of a long term stewardship plan, the Friends of Arlington’s Great Meadows (FoAGM) is improving the visitor support facilities and better protecting the environment in Arlington’s Great Meadows, located in Lexington. This project proposes to repair and improve a portion of the trail system by constructing approximately 704 feet of boardwalk over two major wetland crossings. By demonstrating concern for this property, encouraging visitation, and boosting public awareness, FoAGM hopes to garner local political support for the preservation of Great Meadows in its natural state for the benefit of all for many years to come.
Part II A: Description

Scope This project proposes to repair and improve a portion of the trail system in the Great Meadows property, owned by the town of Arlington and located in the town of Lexington. Great Meadows is 183 natural acres of mostly wetland purchased by Arlington as a public water supply in the 19th century. It is near Arlington Reservoir, Whipple Hill, and several smaller conservation areas that have trails, and abuts the Minuteman Bikeway, the busiest conduit of non-motorized recreational traffic in the state. Great Meadows sees a diverse range of passive recreational use by local residents including hiking, running, cycling, dog walking, nature viewing, and cross country skiing, and is a growing school field trip destination. The project will solve long standing wetland trail problems.

Problem Because two popular trail sections in Great Meadows cross extensive wetlands, they are underwater and muddy for 2 to 6 months a year (see current conditions photos). During this time, visitors are forced to choose between limiting the scope of their visit to Great Meadows, exiting the Meadows to travel on the Minuteman Bikeway and busy surrounding streets, or slogging through deep water and mud to get from one high ground area to another. This results in a negative experience for visitors, and more importantly, environmental damage to possibly the largest contiguous wetland in Lexington.

Tasks Given the lack of good alternatives to the wetland crossings of these trails, FoAGM proposes to construct two boardwalks (see drawing for locations). Boardwalk 1 is approximately 192 feet long, and boardwalk 2 is approximately 448 feet long, for a total length of 640 feet. Both structures will be designed to survive a 100 year flood and will be approximately 3 feet wide to accommodate the current range of human-powered visitors while preserving the narrow character of the existing trails and protecting the wetland below (see boardwalk example photos). To allow users to pass each other on these long structures and to provide the many planned school groups close access to wetlands, adjoining platforms 6 to 8 feet wide will also be constructed, one on boardwalk 1, and 3 on boardwalk 2. The long term stewardship plan under development for Great Meadows includes closing other less used wetland trails, marking trails, and adding signs and maps to direct visitors to the new boardwalks.

The grant funds will be used to purchase all materials and delineate wetlands as required by the Lexington Conservation Commission. The project incurs no costs to Arlington or Lexington. All logistics and construction work will be done by volunteer labor recruited from Arlington and Lexington residents. Local participation in similar projects in Lexington has been very successful in the past and FoAGM has developed a regular following of approximately 100 members over the past 2 years that can be tapped for volunteers. Arlington, which is significantly more populous than Lexington, will be aggressively solicited for citizen volunteer labor.

Program Criteria As described throughout this proposal, the project meets all of the program selection criteria listed in the RTP brochure.
Environment and Permits Once complete, the project will effectively halt wetland damage by insulating the large central marsh that occupies most of Great Meadows from the large majority of visitors. All structures will be designed for minimal ground footprint and minimal permanent interference with wetland hydrology and biology. Construction methods using hand tools will be employed to minimize temporary disruption of the areas caused by digging. Materials will be shuttled to the boardwalk sites via pickup truck where possible and hand carried where necessary to minimize wear on surrounding upland trails.

Because all of the project work occurs either within wetlands, or within a 100 foot wetland buffer zone, WPA Form 1 - Request for Determination of Applicability must be filed with the Lexington Conservation Commission before any work begins. Based on past history, the Commission will issue a negative determination allowing the work to proceed with a short list of conditions to minimize wetland impact during construction.

Timeline When the grant is approved, Request for Determination forms will be submitted to the Lexington Conservation Commission. This process generally takes between 4 and 8 weeks. The shorter boardwalk 1 site tends to dry up earlier than the larger boardwalk 2 site and is near the paved bikeway making materials delivery easier, so its construction can be completed in one early summer 2004 weekend day. Because the longer boardwalk 2 construction site is sometimes flooded well into summer and is farther from large truck access, it will require 3 late summer or fall 2004 weekend days to complete. Labor will be all volunteer recruited from local and regional conservation organizations, and Arlington and Lexington residents.

Part II B: Community Support

Needs Arlington is densely populated with little natural open space and virtually no budget to manage it. Great Meadows is a valuable natural asset to the citizens of Arlington only ½ mile from its border and is prominent in the Arlington Open Space Plan. Its landscape contrasts with and complements nearby conservation areas enjoyed by Lexington residents and it is at the top of the list of critical properties to protect in the Lexington Open Space and Recreation Plan. This long neglected surplus public land has served as de facto conservation land and passive recreational space, even while flooded to serve as a reservoir, since its purchase more than 100 years ago. As part of a long term stewardship plan being developed, FoAGM is stepping in where the town cannot afford to by improving the visitor support facilities at Great Meadows and better protecting the environment within its borders. Recently an information kiosk was installed, truckloads of litter and large junk items were removed, visitor parking permission was acquired from an abutting business, and trail maintenance has been started. Entrance signs, a second kiosk, and more trail work are planned for 2004 and beyond. By demonstrating concern for this property, encouraging visitation, and boosting public awareness, FoAGM hopes to garner local political support for the preservation of Great Meadows in its natural state for the benefit of all for many years to come.
Partnerships and Support  FoAGM will continue to grow the long list of organizations and agencies that have contributed to the stewardship of Great Meadows over the past 2 years: The Arlington Land Trust, Citizens for Lexington Conservation, the Lexington Conservation Stewards, Boy Scouts of America, Arlington and Lexington Public Schools, the Waldorf School, the Lexington Christian Academy, the Beverly Healthcare East Village nursing home, the New England Mountain Bike Association, the Arlington Conservation Commission, the Friends of Robbins Farm, the Lexington DPW, and the Arlington and Lexington Boards of Selectmen. These relationships demonstrate that FoAGM leads a unified effort across community boundaries.

Attached are letters of support from the Arlington Board of Selectmen (includes their permission as the land manager), the Arlington Conservation Commission, Citizens for Lexington Conservation, and a reproduction of a supporting article published in the Boston Globe.

Part III: Budget

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<th>Item</th>
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<th>Materials per foot</th>
<th>Item Cost</th>
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<td>Match at $10 per volunteer hour</td>
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<td>Total project value</td>
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Miscellaneous
- Wetland delineation, all areas: $500

Proposed boardwalks
- 1: 192 feet at $15.00 per foot = $2,880, 1.5 people hours = 128 people hours
- 2: 448 feet at $15.00 per foot = $6,720, 1.5 people hours = 299 people hours
- Widened platforms, both boardwalks, for wildlife viewing: 64 feet at $19.00 per foot = $1,216, 1.5 people hours = 43 people hours

Totals
- Miscellaneous: 0 feet at $500 = $500, 0 people hours
- Proposed boardwalks: 704 feet at $10,816 = $11,316, 470 people hours

Grand Total: 704 feet at $11,316 = $11,316, 470 people hours
Current Conditions Photos – Boardwalk Site 1
Current Conditions Photos – Boardwalk Site 2
Boardwalk Example Photos