

Massachusetts Department of Public Health Success Stories



MASS IN MOTION FALL RIVER



Clearing the Path to Fall River's Cook Pond

SUMMARY

Sometimes natural resources for physical activity and recreation are sitting idle, hiding in plain view, just waiting to be found. This was the case for Cook Pond, a hidden gem with a three mile circumference in the South End of Fall River. Cook Pond is in an area of the city that is highly developed and has few recreational resources for its neighborhoods. Recognizing the pond's potential, Mass in Motion Fall River coordinator Julie Kelly teamed up with the Father Kelly Neighborhood Association and a handful of other community partners to clear the path to better health and wellbeing for Fall River residents.

CHALLENGE

Cook Pond rests within a three mile circumference in the South End of Fall River, but despite its size and location, there was no easy way to get to it. Until recently, it had been a hidden gem completely surrounded by old mill buildings, private and public housing, high rises, and the Henry Lord Middle School. The Pond is in an area of the city that is highly developed and has little recreational resources for its neighborhoods — a perfect opportunity to improve what already exists. In 2010, Mass in Motion Fall River coordinator Julie Kelly teamed up with the **Father Kelly Neighborhood Association**, the **Trustees of Reservations (TTOR)**, and a handful of other community partners to clear a path to better healthy and wellbeing for Fall River residents by opening up access to Cook Pond.

SOLUTION

Mass in Motion Fall River had access to key stakeholders on the East side of the Pond, and decided to start their work there at the Henry Lord Middle School. They met with the National Guard and National Grid to get their support, and also partnered with the State's **Department of Fisheries and Wildlife**, which already grants access to fisherman. BB Construction also gave permission for access to the shoreline, while dialogue is underway and looking very promising with **Southpointe Rehabilitation Center**. The Fall River School Department and Housing Authority have also been enthusiastic about the project from the start. Assistance has also been provided by **SITEC**, an engineering firm that has provided pro bono planning and mapping for Phase One.

“Community partners have been essential in reaching out to the property owners. Kelley Whitmore of the Trustees of Reservations among others, have really sunk their teeth into this project.”

JULIE KELLY
MASS IN MOTION
FALL RIVER COORDINATOR

For more information, visit www.mass.gov/massinmotion

PARTNERS

Healthy City New Fall River, Trustees of Reservations (TTOR), Youth Conservation Corps of TTOR, Henry Lord Middle School, Father Kelly Neighborhood Association, National Guard, National Grid, Massachusetts Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, BB Construction, Fall River School Department, Fall River Housing Authority, Southpointe Rehabilitation Center, SITEC, Residents of Fall River

CONTACT

Julie Kelley

Mass in Motion
Fall River Coordinator
jkelly@fallriverma.org

RESULTS

In Summer 2012, actual on-the-ground trail-making was initiated when members of TTOR's **Youth Conservation Corp** gathered to remove invasive vines, brush, and trash on the northern most shoreline on Dwelly Street. Residents like Oliver Pires-Acushnet were thrilled by the neighborhood improvement. He explained, *"I didn't know it was here at all. It's surprising to find a big pond in the middle of the city!"*

Fall River residents are coming together and feeling good about contributing to the unveiling of Cook Pond. Local Youth Conservation Corp volunteer Jared Amarin stated, *"I love how people walking by tell us that we are doing a good job — people are really thankful."* Resident Dean Sylvaria said it's shown her a new part of Fall River that hasn't been accessible. *"I'd like to look back at it one day and know that I helped to make it available."*

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In July 2013, the Youth Conservation Corps of TTOR will clear a rustic trail from the Henry Lord Middle School all the way up to the MA Fisheries and Wildlife property. The continuation of the pathway northerly awaits the formal permission of the National Guard and National Grid. *"Obtaining authorization to use private property is a time consuming, but very rewarding activity,"* Mass in Motion Fall River coordinator Julie Kelly explained. Two more phases are being planned to create a three mile walking path around the pond. The goal is to bring more people outdoors to enjoy the beauty of Cook Pond, to keep themselves in shape and in good health, while reducing crime and pollution in the area.



For more information, visit www.mass.gov/massinmotion