



Andover Village
Improvement Society
Andover's Land Trust
Founded 1894

Fall 2025
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avis update

Russ Cannizzaro, AVIS Warden and Avid Hiker

By Alix Driscoll

Five years ago Warden Russ Cannizzaro arrived in town and settled at Riverside Woods, the former land owned by the Franciscan monks and, before that, the Penacook Indigenous People. Coming from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, he had lived in Manhattan for almost three decades trading in commodities: wheat, corn, sorghum, oil and gas requiring many trips to the Midwest.

When settling down he sought out the great peaks of New England for hiking and trained as an Appalachian Mountain Club leader. ... "I just like to hike and to do it," he shares. "My hiking takes me to many peaks in New England and some of them are less than 4,000 feet. For instance, I enjoy hiking Mount Greylock in the Northern Berkshires and that is only about 3,400 feet." This summer season Cannizzaro has already hiked the Belknaps, Mount Everett in the Berkshires, Mount Sunapee and Mount Cardigan, and soon will be hiking Mount Monadnock, Mount Greylock, Camel's Hump in Vermont, and Smarts Mountain."

Double Duty

Cannizzaro wears both the green and tan hat of an AVIS warden and the blue hat of an Andover Conservation Commission steward working for three to four hours each week on the trails of "his reservations". Cannizzaro assists Andover's Land Manager, Mike Murray, in the role of a steward of the Town's Bald Hill and Wood Hill reservations trails. Always taking the viewpoint of a hiker, he enjoys the compliments he earns from his labors.



Cannizzaro is the first AVIS warden of the newly named Susan Stott Reservation. Before the official start of summer, he had already surmounted four mountains with at least a half dozen to go. Photo by Margaret Cannizzaro.

Goldsmith Woodlands Property Transferred from The Boston Foundation to AVIS

By Susan Stott, AVIS Trustee

After nearly 50 years of providing careful stewardship of the Goldsmith Woodlands, the Andover Village Improvement Society (AVIS) is now its owner. The deed transferring ownership of the land from The Boston Foundation to AVIS was recorded on May 16, 2025.

This is a very exciting moment for AVIS. We are thrilled to take on full responsibility for this property and to move forward with our plans to install AVIS's first All Persons Trail that will provide access to this beautiful land for people of all abilities.

The preservation of the Goldsmith Woodlands dates to 1966, when Bessie Goldsmith took steps to ensure that her land, approximately 140 acres between South Main Street and Fosters Pond, would "forever be held in trust... as a sanctuary for wild animals, birds, flowers, and trees."

In 1977, AVIS entered into an agreement with the holder of Bessie's trust to use the premises "only for the operation of a natural woodlands and wildlife area." At the time, access to the Goldsmith Woodlands was through a small easement from South Main Street and the only parking was along Route 28.

Both the trust and the corresponding fund were transferred to The Boston Foundation in 1996. When the house and land at 491 South Main Street was sold in 2000, AVIS was able to acquire it to provide off-highway parking with the help of The Boston Foundation and the fund established by Bessie Goldsmith. In 2004, AVIS acquired an adjacent parcel and received permission from the Conservation Commission to construct a small parking area.

Today, the Goldsmith Woodlands is AVIS's most-visited reservation, offering gentle terrain and gorgeous views of Fosters Pond. The AVIS Board of Trustees decided the trail to Bessie's Point, a popular overlook, would be an ideal location for its first All Persons Trail, as its relatively flat grade will allow Forest Service Trail Accessibility Guidelines to be met with reasonable modifications to the topography.



At Bessie's Point at the Goldsmith Woodlands, AVIS now owns all of Bessie Goldsmith's land. Photograph by Mike Timko

In June 2024, AVIS was awarded a \$100,000 MassTrails grant for the project, which will be constructed by the Appalachian Mountain Club professional trail crew using a crushed stone surface.

Recent discussions with The Boston Foundation regarding additional funding for the trail led to the Foundation’s offer to transfer the entire Goldsmith property to AVIS.

“The Boston Foundation continues to be a proud steward of Bessie Goldsmith’s legacy in and beyond Andover,” said Kate Guedj, Senior Vice President and Chief Philanthropic Officer at The Boston Foundation. “The transfer of this parcel to AVIS enhances that legacy by making it possible for visitors of all abilities to access and to enjoy one of the community’s most special natural spaces, and gives our AVIS partners greater flexibility in caring for it.”

“We are very grateful for The Boston Foundation’s support,” said Stott.

For more information about the Goldsmith Woodlands and the plans for the All Persons Trail, visit avisandover.org

AVIS 2024 Unaudited Financials from Annual Meeting 2025

Profit & Loss

Income & Gains:	\$315,000
Expenses:	\$139,000
Net Income:	\$176,000

Balance Sheet

Cash and endowments:	\$1,434,000
Fixed assets and Land:	\$5,751,000
TOTAL Assets:	\$7,185,000

Accruals and Equity \$7,185,000

By Mark Kaluzny, Treasurer



President’s Letter

By Annie Gilbert



As I step into my new role as AVIS President, I am mindful of the strong legacy of leadership our land trust has enjoyed through many decades. This has never been more true than during the seven years of outgoing President John Hess’s tenure. AVIS could not have asked for a better leader and ambassador, and we are so grateful that he will continue to serve as a Trustee. Thank you, John!

Those of you who attended the Annual Meeting in April know that we recognized another remarkable AVIS leader, Susan Stott, by naming a reservation in her honor. The Susan Stott Reservation is located in the Deer Jump trail system on the parcel of land previously owned by the Franciscan Seminary. Thanks to Susan’s extraordinary efforts as Land Acquisition Chair, AVIS was able to purchase this property in 2017, and we are so proud to rename it in her honor.

Looking ahead, I’m excited to share that Lynn Landry is our new AVIS Vice President; Mark Kaluzny is our new Treasurer; Libby Poland has returned to AVIS as a Trustee; and Doug Cummings will be working alongside Land Manager David Dargie as our newly-appointed Assistant Land Manager. We are extremely fortunate to have so many people sharing their talents with AVIS, whether as Trustees, Land Managers, Wardens, Rangers, Eco Team members, hike leaders, photographers, and more. I am beyond excited to work with and learn from such a host of exceptional people. Please reach out if you have ideas to share, or want to expand your involvement with AVIS!

Just before this issue went to press, we received the excellent news that the Andover Conservation Commission voted to approve an order of conditions for the Goldsmith Woodlands All Persons Trail project. Huge thanks go out to Susan Stott and to Land Manager David Dargie for successfully shepherding this complicated permitting process to fruition. We are thrilled to announce that on July 9, an AMC trail crew arrived at Goldsmith to begin work on the project. At the time of this writing, the crew’s objective is to construct approximately 200 feet of trail per week, aiming for a finish date in late October or early November. Of course, weather and other factors may have an impact, so please visit avisandover.org for timely status updates on the construction of the trail and for all the latest news.

For the safety of the public and the work crew, Goldsmith Woodlands will be closed while the All Persons Trail is under construction. We apologize for the inconvenience and look forward to enjoying this special place with everyone once construction is complete. Thankfully, there are many beautiful trails and reservations to explore in Andover, and we invite you to visit avisandover.org or andovertrails.org for ideas of other places to walk and hike.

See you on the trails!

Get to Know the New Susan Stott Reservation

The reservation is 26 acres along the Merrimack River and AVIS acquired it from New England Melmark in 2017 after the school purchased the former Franciscan Monastery. It protects the Bay Circuit Trail.



It can be accessed from the small parking area at the entrance to Riverside Woods, from the end of Merrimack Street in Tewksbury next to the water treatment plant, or just by walking southwest along the Deer Jump Trail along the river from downstream, where there is access from several cul-de-sacs.

Trustee Susan Stott visits her new reservation. At its 2025 Annual Meeting, the Board of Trustees named a parcel of land along the Merrimack River in her honor for her extraordinary service to AVIS. Melmark New England acquired the former

Franciscan Monastery property to control the parking essential to the school. After more than five years of conversations with Melmark, AVIS was able to acquire 26 acres of the former Franciscan property from the school in 2017 to protect the river and the Bay Circuit Trail. Photo by Penny Joel.

Four Decades Ago Botanist Walter Kittredge Explored This Land

By Walter Kittredge

Walter Kittredge, Curatorial Assistant at the Harvard University Herbaria, wrote the following about the (former) Franciscan property in its entirety. This land of which he has written is now the renamed Susan Stott Reservation along the Merrimack River.

“I first walked this section (the Franciscan property) on Labor Day in 1982 as a young botanist and was immediately impressed by how different this forest felt, as though one had entered a cathedral, with its towering arched trees. The openness of the forest added to the effect as the long, large trunks stood out, their crowns far overhead. This mature stand of Oak-Pine-Hemlock Forest is uncommon in our area, requiring cool steep north-facing slopes like this one.

“There are mature black and paper birches scattered throughout the forest, indicating that either a fire occurred, or a large blowdown, perhaps from the 1938 hurricane. At this point in time there are very few saplings, which is typical in mature forests.

“During my initial visit I found two beautiful ferns that were unfamiliar to me, Silvery Glade Fern and Long Beech Fern, as well as Maidenhair Fern, all of which are locally rare. I also saw bluebells on a sunny riverbank, fruiting plants of both Red and White Baneberry, and the variegated leaves of Downy Rattlesnake Orchid. And, of course, one of my favorite trees, the Striped Maple with its broad leaves and white striped bark appeared. All of these plants are indicators of a very rich and unusual flora. In my forty years of field work on local floras I don’t know of another place that matches it.”



Lezz Giles from Eco Team working in the tangle.



Eco Team workers: left to right: Suzanne Korschun, Elisabeth Hoehn and Nate Whitmer in late June, 2025 at West Parish Meadow battling lots of honeysuckle.

A Strategic Walk along the Planned All Persons Trail at the Goldsmith Woodlands

By Amy Janovsky Land Steward Committee Lead

So where is the All Persons Trail going and why? As David Dargie, AVIS Land Manager, described it: the crushed stone trail, six feet wide, will be set into the already wide natural trail heading out to Bessie's Point. The existing trail will border the crushed stones on both sides. The ground will be leveled to offer only a five to eight percent rise for the walkers. The All Persons Trail will provide no tripping hazards and will be wide enough to allow walkers to walk and to converse side by side.

On June 14, Amy Janovsky, Land Stewardship Committee Lead saw an opportunity to ask Mike Barry and Alex Wu of Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of the US Department of Agriculture to walk the main trail out to Bessie's Point and to ascertain the health of the forest. Barry has been a valued AVIS advisor on prior projects at the Shawsheen River and Deer Jump Reservation and Janovski wanted to capture the opportunity to seek grant funding for any restoration work along the trail that NRCS might advise.

David Dargie, AVIS Land Manager, started the walk by describing the planned trail improvements, including removal of (mostly dead) trees along the trail that either impede planned work or pres-

ent hazards to hikers. He noted that leaving tall

stumps will create tall "snags" for wildlife without creating trail hazards. Woody debris will be left on the ground to hold moisture and to return biomass to the soil.

Several AVIS board members and wardens joined the hike, and enjoyed the opportunity to hear Barry and his colleague, Alex's, thoughts about the overall health of the reservation. The splendid

The splendid news is that there is good forest regeneration occurring on most of the reservation and Barry did not see a need for underplanting.

news is that there is good forest regeneration occurring on most of the reservation, and Barry did not see a need for underplanting. He agreed that all equipment entering the reservation should be steam cleaned to prevent bringing unwanted seed and fragments of invasive plants onto the property. In forest openings, birds also become a vector for spreading invasive plants as they gorge on fruit and berries, and then perch nearby.

AVIS's Eco Team will help to manage to reduce nearby fruit/seed sources. AVIS has managed The Goldsmith Woodlands for many years.

"Now that we own the property, we are responsible for its stewardship in perpetuity, and this was a great opportunity to hear from experts as we begin that role," shared Janovsky.



AVIS leaders gathered to take a fact-finding site walk at the proposed All Persons Trail at Goldsmith Woodlands in late June, 2025 with experts from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, (NRCS) Mike Barry and Alex Wu. From left to right: Alix Driscoll AVIS Trustee, Mike Barry and Alex Wu from NRCS; Lynn Landry, Head of the Eco Team Committee and AVIS Vice President; Amy Janovsky, Land Steward Committee Lead; Susan Stott, AVIS Trustee; Jim Sutton, AVIS Trustee; and Warden Rich Bizzozero, of the AVIS Deer Jump Reservation. Photograph by David Dargie, AVIS Land Manager.

North Reading Subaru Donates 30 Young Native Trees to AVIS

By Amy Janovsky, AVIS Land Stewardship Committee Lead

David Melkonian, general manager of the North Reading Subaru dealership, offered AVIS 30 native trees to plant on our reservations, which we happily accepted. Over the past two years, we have also been given trees by Walter Kittredge, of the Oak Haven Sanctuary in North Reading, and by the Massachusetts Department of Natural Resources. The Land Stewardship team is happy to accept healthy native plants to augment our purchases for restoration work on the AVIS reservations.



Amy Janovsky, AVIS Land Stewardship Committee Lead, accepts trees donated by David Melkonian, manager of the North Reading Subaru, in honor of Arbor Day. They are all native trees: red maple, river birch, sweet gum, and serviceberry. Photo by North Reading Subaru staff.

Announcing the Second
AVIS Photo Contest
look for details on the website AVISANDOVER.ORG.
The deadline is mid December.



New AVIS Members

June 1, 2024 to June 1, 2025

Holly Burns	Roseann Lee
Paul Chase	Christine Lojko
Doug Cummings	Danna McGrath
Colleen Farley	John Marble
Patrick Farrell	Danna McGrath
John Harrington	Peter Mueller
& Jean Elrick	Mustang Consulting
Sally Gordon	Randy Ottman
Dianne Jannetti	Elaine Panneton
Casey and Zachary Johnson	Leonard Polonski
Scott Johnson	Nancy Shepherd
Larry Jordon	Geoffrey Simons
Mark Kane	Evelyn Stouse
Ulrike Kapp	

AVIS Membership

Name: _____

Address: _____

Town, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Dues: _____ \$30 Individual _____ \$100 Sustaining
_____ \$50 Family _____ \$15 Student & Senior

You can join or renew online at www.avisandover.org/join.html or make check payable to "AVIS" and mail to :

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PO Box 5097
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For information about planned giving or stock donations contact info@avisandover.org. Contributions and dues are tax deductible to the extent permitted by federal regulations. Thank you!

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To check for other hikes visit
ANDOVERTRAILS.ORG

For AMC walks see
AMCBOSTON.ORG

The AVIS Update is a biannual publication of The Andover Village Improvement Society. The mission of AVIS is to acquire and preserve Andover land in its natural state. More than 1,200 acres of land are managed by AVIS and are open to all for passive recreation.

Calendar for the Fall Eco Team Work Parties

September 13	Saturday 8:30-11:00	TBA
September 20	Saturday 10:00-4:00	Andover Day, Downtown
September 27	Saturday 8:30-11:00	TBA
October 11	Saturday 8:30-11:00	TBA
October 19	Sunday 1:00-3:30	TBA
November 1	Saturday 8:30-11:00	TBA
November 15	Saturday 8:30-11:00	TBA
November 29	Saturday 8:30-11:00	TBA



A pileated woodpecker is feeding his youngster on the Nat Smith Reservation. In this hole in the dead tree there were at least three young ones. Both male and female adults share the feeding responsibilities. Photograph by Mike Timko.



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