

F# 14/8/16

30 March 2016



Carmen,

I am having trouble with my email and computer but wanted to get this note to you relative to Estabrook Woods.

First, I am a dog lover! It was walking our dog on woods trails, discovering what he was noticing, that started my interest in wildlife tracking. As a dog walker yourself, I'm sure you have had the experience of having your own dog on a leash and then meeting unleashed dogs. Right away the leashed dog is at a disadvantage. The situation can be hazardous if the leash trips up its holder or if dogs become aggressive.

I no longer walk in Estabrook Woods or Mt. Misery, even when we still had our dog. There are too many unleashed dogs and a disgusting amount of dog feces and bags of dog feces.

I also wanted to share a personal experience that I learned a lot from. I was asked to lead wildlife tracking outings at Arlington Great Meadows in Lexington over several years. Despite the fact that the property was heavily used, I would always be able to find track and sign of a variety of animals, including gray fox, fisher, mink and others. The last time I was there, there were many, many more dogs present. I asked one dog walker about this and was told that a nearby conservation area had closed to dogs, and now they were all coming to Arlington Great Meadows. I then spent hours scouting for track and sign in anticipation of the workshop, but I couldn't even find one deer track! The snow conditions were very good, but there was no wildlife to be found.

This experience really impressed me. It was clear that animals had responded to the increase in human and dog activity. When I apply what I learned to what is happening at Estabrook Woods, I am very concerned. Estabrook Woods was severely degraded when Middlesex School built into its center. Now it faces even more severe overuse and abuse. I encourage the Town and the Estabrook Accessibility Committee to carefully consider what needs to be done to preserve Estabrook Woods for the long-term. People may be adamant about what they want or feel entitled to, but it is our responsibility to look out for this special place for generations to come.

Sincerely,