



July 18, 2007

Joint Committee On Bonding, Capital Expenditures and State Assets
Sen. Mark C. Montigny
and Rep. David Flynn, Chairman
Room 466, State House
Boston, MA 02133

The Sierra Club of Massachusetts would like to be recorded in favor of the state acquisition of the Silver Maple Forest through House 21, filed by Reps. Brownsberger and Marzilli and Sen. Tolman. Though this land is in Cambridge and Belmont, it has statewide environmental significance. The innovative approach to financing the state acquisition of urban land might also become a model.

The 15.6-acre Silver Maple Forest immediately adjoins the 120-acre Alewife Reservation of the Department of Conservation and Recreation. The beautiful land now slated for development and the section of Alewife Reservation abutting it are particularly unusual because they are wild, - not parkland like most of the reservation. Urban wilds are rare, but this urban wild is actually accessible by public transportation.

The Silver Maple Forest also provides wetland and upland habitat for the many species that need both and helps control stormwater runoff, improving the water quality of Little River and Alewife Brook and protecting the Alewife area and downstream communities against flooding. Unfortunately, the proposed development would destroy these attributes. The current proposal would build right up to the edge of the 200-foot riverfront zone and the 100-foot wetland buffer, doing great damage to the wetlands and destroying the urban wild in the Alewife Reservation as well as the Silver Maple Forest.

The proposed state-municipal-private funding for this purchase seems like an interesting innovation for cases where the state could not accept all the financial risk of an eminent domain taking. Developable urban land is unavoidably pricey. We'd appreciate the committee's serious consideration of this method for meeting the cost, and we recommend that you report the bill out favorably for consideration of a vote by the legislature.

Respectfully submitted,

James Bryan McCaffrey
Director