

LaGasse Medal Nominations
c/o Carolyn Mitchell, Honors & Awards Coordinator
American Society of Landscape Architects
636 Eye St, NW
Washington, DC 2001

Re: Nomination of Katherine Abbott for The LaGasse Medal

Dear Executive Committee and Trustees:

It gives us great pride and honor to nominate Ms. Katherine F Abbott of Massachusetts for the 2013 Alfred B LaGasse Medal.

For over 25 years now, our Governors, public administrators, environmental advocates, park users and stewards of public lands across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts have turned to Kathy Abbott for guidance, leadership and creative ingenuity in the proper management of our public lands and the improved preservation and conservation of our natural resources. Like Alfred B LaGasse himself, Kathy has devoted her career to ensuring public lands are professionally managed, well respected and wisely preserved and used for the benefit of all.

Kathy began her career at the Park Ranger level in our state parks system where she saw firsthand the challenges and importance of proper land and park management. More importantly, she became aware of the importance parks and public landscapes can mean to individuals. As a fierce advocate of strong interpretive experiences to match the natural landscape Kathy has worked in both the public and private sectors to ensure that each individual visitor, regardless of demographic group, physical ability, degree of environmental awareness or recreational interest could visit, enjoy the Commonwealth's public lands and walk away refreshed with a keener appreciation for our land and natural resources.

With this background, and her vast professional training in Public Administration (MPA, Harvard), Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning (BS, UMass) and Arboriculture and Park Management (Stockbridge School of Agriculture), Kathy was a perfect choice to work under both Governor Dukakis and Governor Weld in creating and implementing the state's very first state-wide coordinated land acquisition plan.

Working with a wide array of stakeholders from farmers and agricultural experts, sportsmen and fisheries and wildlife professionals, hikers, campers, foresters, and urban park enthusiasts to land conservation organizations and political leaders across the state, Kathy developed an integrated land acquisition plan that was sustainable both politically and environmentally. This plan yielded a 10-year capital bond authorization and spending plan for across the Commonwealth of \$68M per year, spawned a number of creative new land protection programs and remains the model for all our state agencies today.

Kathy left state government and for five years used her professional training, vivacious spirit and experience as the Vice President of the international School for Field Studies to introduce over 1,000 students per year in 7 different countries to the professional opportunities available and importance of proper management of public lands and the conservation of natural resources.

Ms Abbott was lured back to Boston in 1997 to become the very first President of the Boston Harbor Island Alliance (BHIA). Born during the dark days when the federal government was closing down national parks across the country, Congress created the Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area (BHINRA) in 1996, only the second National Recreation Area in the country (behind San Francisco Bay). This new kind of national park relied on a Congressionally-designated non-profit entity to raise the funds, provide the planning and communications and advance the causes of the National Park Service. It was envisioned as a new model of park stewardship for the 21st Century. That Congressionally-designated non-profit entity was the Boston Harbor Island Alliance (BHIA).

In Kathy's 7 years as President of BHIA (1997-2003) she brought both the new Park and the new BHIA organization from infancy to one of the most well respected and effective players in the Massachusetts environmental and conservation community. She opened several of the 34 islands to the public for the very first time including Little Brewster, home of the famous Boston Light lighthouse, increased overall annual visitorship into the thousands and created both educational and recreational programs as well as iconic civic events that continue to draw people to the 34 islands today on a regular basis.

Working through developing real partnerships with government agencies, corporate leaders, environmental NGOs and philanthropic individuals and foundations, Kathy built a funding base of support from zero to millions of dollars in both operational and capital funds.

Boston Light on Little Brewster Island is the oldest manned lighthouse in the country. Although it was within the BHINRA, it was closed to any public access. Kathy orchestrated a process involving eight public and private partner organizations to re-open Boston Light to the public in 2001, making Boston Light one of the only lighthouses in the country where visitors are able to climb to the top.

In addition, she initiated projects to take advantage of the educational potential of the islands, ranging from an island-based curriculum project targeted largely to inner-city middle school children, to scientific symposia led by Dr. E.O Wilson and co-sponsored by members of collaborating federal and state government agencies.

While at the Island Alliance Kathy was a leader in building effective and cooperative relations, with a high level of trust and respect, among the Park's many diverse public and private partners. The Park today is a nationally recognized model of public/private cooperative management.

In 2002, the Massachusetts Legislature, after years of intense debate, merged the state's two primary state park agencies into a single entity. The Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) was entirely focused on the 103 communities surrounding Metropolitan Boston and had a mission to serve the hardcore urban recreational needs of an inner city population. It oversaw the nation's first public beach and numerous properties designed and built by Frederick Law Olmsted, the founder of American

landscape architecture and the nation's foremost park maker. The Department of Environmental Management (DEM) was focused on managing state forests, large scale rural parks and a wide array of cultural institutions from Plymouth Rock to the Berkshires. Both agencies were well over 100 years old and each had deep-seeded bureaucracies and land management cultures that were vastly different.

The merger of these two entities was legislated for the worst possible political reasons – to cut both agencies budgets drastically.

Environmental and conservation advocates feared the merger would result in the utter destruction of BOTH the MDC and the DEM and the loss of public confidence and funding for our state's public lands.

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the new merged entity, on its first day managed 449,000 acres of public landscape, operated 250 recreational facilities, served over 20 million visitors per year and had a staff of 1100 fulltime employees. Those of us close to the operations of the two former agencies were unsure whether the biggest threat to the new DCR was internal cultural and political fighting, external loss of public confidence, dramatically reduced funding levels or a well-planned philosophical destruction of government-funded park and public lands management.

It was with virtual unanimous relief within the land conservation community that Governor Mitt Romney chose Kathy Abbott to become the first Commissioner of the DCR. Most felt it was a hugely impossible task.

During her critical tenure at DCR, the new agency was born, reshaped and invigorated to meet their challenges by developing solid and cohesive management policies, creating novel partnerships with the non-profit and private sectors to supplement public funding and building an organization that today is viewed as stronger and one which the activist community feels has successfully avoided the political pitfalls we all feared back in 2002. It is unimaginable that any individual other than Kathy Abbott could have been more successful as the first DCR Commissioner.

Since leaving state government again, Kathy embarked on creating a grassroots public advocacy campaign to increase political support and public funding for our state park system. She has also worked for two of our largest non-profit land conservation organizations (Trust for Public Land (TPL) and The Trustees of Reservations (TTOR)) focusing on enhancing visitor services and public engagement at their hundreds of privately held conservation properties. Recently, she has taken on her latest challenge in developing the potential of Tower Hill Botanic Gardens in the central part of the state into the largest and most successful horticultural facility in the Commonwealth.

Bringing professionalism to the management of our state parks systems. Creating new and innovative solutions to our state's multi-dimensional land acquisition needs. Igniting the imagination of a whole new generation of potential landscape architects and park managers across 7 different countries. Developing and successfully nurturing a brand new model of national park management that continues our country's greatest experiment in an era of constrained resources and diminished political support. Working to build public advocacy solutions to reverse those trends of declining resources and political support. Taking huge personal political risk to ensure centuries of investment in unique natural and

cultural resources in Massachusetts were not lost to political expediency and honing land management skills and educational opportunities that bind our citizens closer to our land. Purchasing and conserving thousands and thousands of acres of land through numerous public acquisition programs, non-profit donations and personal land restrictions in every corner of our state. Opening 34 islands in our core metropolitan city for active and passive recreation in a way generations have never seen before. And a continued belief and demonstrated commitment to the value and importance of proper management of public lands and the judicious use of our natural resources for the common good.

Through all of these ways and more, Kathy Abbott has made notable and unique contributions, from every facet and level of land stewardship, to the conservancy of our Commonwealth's parks, public lands and natural resources. We are confident she would be an exemplary recipient of the prestigious LaGasse Medal and a real tribute to the American Society of Landscape Architects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kathleen Ogden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kathleen Ogden, President
Boston Society of Landscape Architects

HENRY P. KENDALL FOUNDATION

Dear LaGasse Medal Nominating Committee:

I'm writing to provide my strongest endorsement for the nomination of Kathy Abbott. I knew and worked with Kathy in her capacity as executive vice-president of The Trustees of Reservations, the oldest private land conservation organization in the United States.

Founded in 1891 by landscape architect Charles Eliot, The Trustees mission is *to preserve, for public use and enjoyment properties of exceptional scenic, historic, and ecological value in Massachusetts*. The Trustees are exemplary stewards of more than one hundred extraordinary places that annually welcome over one million visitors.

The properties under The Trustees care include eleven historic properties, five of which are National Historic Landmarks. Together these properties represent a preserved timeline of architecture and landscape architecture over the past 300 years. Additionally, The Trustees care for exquisite gardens and other designed landscapes, including ones designed by Frederick Law Olmsted. Beyond the cultural landscapes, The Trustees own and care for extraordinary ecological landscapes that represent regionally and nationally important habitat for endangered plants and animals.

As executive vice president, Kathy's primary responsibility was to ensure the exemplary care and stewardship of all these properties, while simultaneously welcoming millions of visitors and encouraging engagement and learning by those visitors, thereby promoting a broad land stewardship ethic. As you might imagine, this is not an easy task, as the dual mission of preservation and public use can be in conflict. However, in Kathy's time, both elements succeeded. Indeed significant preservation and stewardship was accomplished while at the same time expanding the ways in which visitors were drawn to and engaged in the understanding and care of the properties.

Without a doubt, Kathy's most important contribution was to help the organization and its many constituents realize that the important work of preservation and stewardship of important natural and cultural landscapes can only be accomplished by inviting the public to join in and help.

I am therefore pleased to provide the strongest possible endorsement for Kathy's nomination for the LaGasse Medal in 2013.

Sincerely,



Andy Kendall, Executive Director

(President, The Trustees of Reservations, 2000-2012)



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LaGasse Medal Nominations
Non Landscape Architect Category
c/o Carolyn Mitchell
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Dear Sir/Madam:

It is my pleasure to support the nomination of Kathy Abbott for the LaGasse Medal/Non-Landscape Architect Category on behalf of the Boston Society of Landscape Architects. I am currently the Board Chairman of Tower Hill Botanic Garden (THBG) in Boylston, MA, and also served in an atypical role as the individual who recruited Kathy to serve in her position as Executive Director of THBG – I am an executive search consultant in my professional life. Kathy has only been at THBG for a few weeks, however I have been working with her for the last six months and feel that I've gotten to know her and about her quite well.

Kathy's accomplishments speak for themselves. She has had a positive effect on every organization she's worked with, and has risen from the ranks to the top of each one. This includes both public and private entities, with operating budgets of \$5m to 82m, and staffs of up to 145 people. Both my Board and I were particularly impressed with how she's been able to build partnerships in both the public and private sectors, and when she takes an entity from small to large, she builds lasting relationships along the way.

Those with whom she has worked have high praise for Kathy. Everyone who I contacted spoke of her energy, motivation and commitment to conservation, and her ability to build a team to accomplish goals. Once she is clear about the vision, she sets the gears in motion to implement it. Her reputation as a team builder impressed us, as did her ability to raise funds in support of the vision.

We feel very fortunate that she is now leading the team at Tower Hill. We have a gem in this 136-acre property with outstanding gardens, programs and facility, and part of what we want Kathy to do is to enhance our reputation both within and outside of Massachusetts. We are confident in Kathy's ability to do all this and more. I can speak for the entire Board in endorsing this nomination wholeheartedly. Thank you for your time and attention.

Most sincerely,

Chris

Christopher S. Reece
Managing Director

LaGasse Medal Nominations [Non Landscape Architect]
c/o Carolyn Mitchell, Honors and Awards Coordinator
American Society of Landscape Architects
636 Eye Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Selection Committee:

Having known Kathy Abbott for three decades, I am honored to recommend her to the ASLA for The LaGasse Medal.

As National Co-Chair of the National Association for Olmsted Parks and Chair of the Massachusetts Association for Olmsted Parks in 1981, I met Kathy Abbott, then a Department of Environmental Management Boston Harbor Islands ranger, when she volunteered to help create an MAOP project: the Boston Park Ranger Program. After working with Kathy and observing her commitment to the environment, her pragmatic approach to problem solving, and her networking skills I asked her to join the MAOP board. From that time in the 1980's until the present, I have worked with Kathy in state government and on numerous private non profit boards. Her rapid rise through the Commonwealth's environmental agencies, from park ranger to planner to management and policy positions was well earned and developed for her a passionately appreciative constituency both within government and the private historic landscape preservation community.

As an advocate for public funding for programs supporting historic landscape preservation Kathy has no peer. Her influence and advocacy has benefitted communities and constituencies across the Commonwealth including the Heritage State Park Program, The Olmsted Historic Landscape Preservation Program, the Bay Circuit Program, the City and Town Commons Program, the Historic Landscape Initiative, the Boston Harbor State Park and the Boston Harbor Islands Partnership. Each of these initiatives reflect her commitment to the preservation, restoration, rehabilitation and appropriate maintenance of public landscapes.

After her departure from government, Kathy's creation of the Conservation and Recreation Campaign at The Trust for Public Land and her leadership role at The Trustees of

Reservations continued her historic landscape preservation career.

Her recent appointment as President of Tower Hill Botanic Gardens is, again, an opportunity for this pragmatic visionary to focus on the historic landscapes of Massachusetts.

I highly recommend her to the LaGasse Medal Nominating Committee.

Sincerely

BETSY SHURE GROSS
25 Edgehill Road
Brookline, MA 02445

LaGasse Medal Nominations [Non Landscape Architect]
C/o Carolyn Mitchell, Honors and Awards Coordinator
American Society of Landscape Architects
636 Eye Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

To the LaGasse Medal Selection Committee:

I am very pleased to send the Committee a strong recommendation for Kathy Abbott to receive the LaGasse Medal. As the 2011 recipient of the award, I am well aware of what it means to receive this prestigious award from ASLA. I have known of Kathy and her work in Massachusetts for many years. She has run huge park systems, preserved and managed significant open space properties all over the state and she has mentored many in the importance of not just preserving but in making these important spaces accessible to the public.

Her work in Massachusetts in all of her positions has made her a national figure in the park and open space field. In 2006 she was asked to serve on the Board of the City Parks Alliance. She was immediately active on our Communications Committee and by 2010 she had taken on the role of Co-Chair. In this capacity Kathy has again shown great leadership. She has helped to direct this national organization dedicated to parks in cities into its second decade. Kathy served on the committee which oversaw the very successful International City Parks Conference in New York City in 2012. Her dedication to parks in cities and to open space preservation has continued on to the national and international level.

Thank you for your consideration of Kathy Abbott . Just as I was honored to receive this award, I know that it would mean so very much to her. It is a tribute to her dedication to improve and preserve the public landscapes of this country.

Most Sincerely,

Tupper Thomas
361 77th Street
Brooklyn, New York 11209