

Annual Report for 1999

Carlisle Trails Committee

The Trails Committee's major focus in 1999 was the O'Rourke Farm, purchased by the Town last year. A cooperative agreement for trail maintenance was signed with the U.S Fish & Wildlife Service as part of the sale of the property to the U.S. government in April. The O'Rourke farm is now part of the larger Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. A trail plan for all of the Refuge in Carlisle, connecting to other trails on conservation land at Foss Farm and the Greenough Land, was developed by the Trails Committee and USFWS personnel. Committee members and other volunteers spent many hours through the year clearing and marking trails. This work will continue next year. (Trails currently open for use are marked with rectangular yellow plastic USFWS markers.) A highlight of the year was the O'Rourke Farm grand opening celebration on Oct. 30. Several hundred people turned out for speeches by local and federal officials including Senator Kennedy, a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new trails, music by the Carlisle school band, and guided trail walks. A new trail map of all the conservation parcels along the Concord River was created for the occasion; copies are available at the Town Clerk's office.

Several bridge building projects occupied the Trails Committee in the fall. Encouraged by the success of the O'Rourke boardwalk project last year, bridges over small streams were constructed at two locations on the Greenough Land, at Barlett Farm off Bellows Hill Road, and on Aberdeen Drive in the Ice Pond development. Groups of enthusiastic volunteers of all ages assisted on each of the bridge building days, lending a community "barn raising" atmosphere to the projects. In addition to bridge building, committee members and other volunteers also participated in trail clearings of the Rockstrom trail, the Town Forest, Towle Field, and the Greenough Land. We also received help from Gary Davis of the Carlisle DPW in filling several holes in the Sachs Greenway trail.

The long saga of the trail easement in the Ice Pond development, connecting two sections of trails in the State Park, came to a happy conclusion this year. The Conservation Commission had the site surveyed to pin down the disputed location of the easement (off the paved roadway on Aberdeen Drive). The trail location was marked with the same blue plastic triangles used in the Park, and a bridge was built, with labor supplied by volunteers from the neighborhood, to cross a small stream. Convinced that the problem had been solved, Town Meeting voted to accept Ice Pond Road as a public way.

The Committee led three public walks this year. In May we visited several historical sites in Great Brook Farm State Park (Indian grinding stone, the Garrison, the City). Those desiring a longer walk continued on to the adjoining Thanksgiving Forest in Chelmsford. In October we gave residents the opportunity to walk the Conant Land prior to a fall Town Meeting vote on its status. (The motion to set aside the undeveloped portion of the Conant Land for conservation land failed). The walk featured two local authorities. Marty Galligan of the Housing Authority pointed out the proposed location of an affordable housing development on the Conant Land and

answered questions about the project. Tony Mariano shared his extensive knowledge of the geology of the area. Also in October, the Committee led several walks of the O'Rourke Farm trails as part of the grand opening celebration.

The Committee began using Internet technology this year to improve communication with trail volunteers and other members of the public. Volunteer coordinator "Carlisle Jack" Innella developed an e-mail system to notify volunteers of trail clearing and bridge building days, public walks, and monthly meetings. This has been very successful. To be included, contact Jack at jinnella@hotmail.com. A Trails Committee room was also set up in the new Carlisle Community Center on the web (<http://carlisle.lotus.com/cc/recept.nsf>). The room includes a calendar of upcoming events, a bulletin board to post questions or opinions, and a filing cabinet with meeting agendas and minutes. We are also experimenting with posting trail maps here; the Conant Land is our first offering. Although the Community Center is new, it has already provided valuable contacts for the committee.

The Trails Committee would like to thank the many volunteers from the community who have helped in our trail projects through the year. Without volunteers, the Town wouldn't have its wonderful trail system. As a token of appreciation, we began distributing Carlisle Trails Committee patches to repeat volunteers this year. They are round, with a blue hiker, patterned after our standard trail markers. The patches, attached to hats or jackets, are also intended to identify Trails Committee members on public walks.

Current members of the Trails Committee are Louise Hara (co-chair), Janet Hentschel (secretary), Jack Innella (volunteer coordinator), Judy Lane, Jay Patrick, Steve Pearlman, and Steve Tobin (co-chair).

Submitted by Steve Tobin