

Annual Report for 2015 Carlisle Trails Committee

The Trails Committee in 2015 pursued its five major goals: 1) public education, 2) maintaining existing trails on public land, 3) working to preserve trails on private land being developed, 4) creating new trails, and 5) advising the Selectmen on trails issues.

Public education –The committee led five public walks this year. A February full moon night hike at Foss Farm drew 40 people in calm, clear conditions with plenty of snow. In May, we co-sponsored a vernal pool walk with the Conservation Foundation and Conservation Commission at Benfield Hill. Dr. Bryan Windmiller talked about life in a vernal pool and caught a number of critters for the participants to examine. Our annual Double Sundae Sunday Saunter on Old Home Day in June was rained out for the first time. On a lovely fall day in October, 25 people walked the Towle Land, enjoying the fall foliage and viewing the new intersection markers. The annual post-Thanksgiving walk was from Great Brook Farm to the Thanksgiving Forest in Chelmsford. 48 people enjoyed the sunshine and unusual 60 degree weather. In addition to the public walks, the committee led a walk for Carlisle Brownies at the Conant Land in November focused on hiking safety.

The Trails Committee's guide book to the Town's conservation lands, "Trails in Carlisle", continues to sell well at the Town Hall and Ferns Country Store. Work is well underway on the next edition, planned for 2016. Individual trail maps are available on the Trails Committee website, carlisletrails.pbworks.com. The website maintained by volunteer Lisa Ankers, links to the Town's web site, and also includes information on the Carlisle Trekker Award and notices for upcoming walks and work days. Volunteer Kim Schive (Trekker #17) started a Facebook page, "Carlisle Trails", to reach out to a different audience with trail information.

The committee made good progress on its multi-year project to add uniquely numbered intersection markers at all major trail junctions in town (outside of Great Brook Farm, which has its own markers). We are working with art students at the Carlisle Public School to add nature-themed art work to each marker, as a way to raise awareness of trails and conservation land in the students and their families, and to make the markers more interesting to hikers. The first 25 markers were installed at the Town Forest and Towle Land this year. The committee walked the other 18 conservation parcels and mapped locations for future markers, 134 in total. These locations will be shown in the new trail book maps. Another 47 markers had numbers routed and are being painted at the school; 21 have had numbers routed, and the rest are in progress.

There was one new Carlisle Trekker Award earned this year for hiking all of Carlisle's trails: Andrew Wilmot (#31), the first to do all the trails on cross country skis!

Trail maintenance and construction – Trails Committee members removed dozens of fallen trees from trails throughout the year on virtually all public lands. In addition, we

invited volunteers to help in a public work day in September. 15 people came out to clear trails in four crews at Great Meadows, Greenough, Banta, Davis Corridor, and the Otter Slide Trail.

Other maintenance projects included repairing 2 boardwalks in Great Meadows and a bridge in Rockstrom, mowing trails in Great Meadows and the Benfield Conservation Land, and clearing vegetation from the canoe landing at the Elliott Preserve.

In terms of new construction, the bridge from Spalding Field to Banta Davis was completed by a private contractor under the Recreation Commission with CPA funding. In May, 20 volunteers built two bridges in the Davis Corridor across seasonal streams. In August, a series of “duck boards” was added to the Davis Corridor trail section relocated last year, to bypass springtime wet spots. In October, 28 volunteers built two boardwalks (23 and 31 feet long) in the Rangeway conservation land. We worked with the State Park on a plan to add two bridges over wet spots on the Otter Slide trail. However, near the end of the year beavers built a dam under a bridge on Old Morse Road and flooded most of the Otter Slide trail, so the plan is on hold. A plan to repair severe erosion on the Old Morse Road trail below a common driveway off Ember Lane was developed with the DPW and approved by Cons Com. Work will occur next year.

Committee member Bert Willard built 4 wooden trail benches. One was installed at Greenough on the Wood Duck Trail, and the rest will be installed next year (Greenough, Benfield Hill, and Spencer Brook Reservation).

Preserving trails and new trails – (1) Boy Scout James Sibley led an Eagle Scout service project to cut the new Coyote Rock Trail in the Town Forest in September. He also added erosion control at the trail entrance off East Street. (2) Boy Scout Matthew Roberts created a new trail and 60-foot boardwalk at Spencer Brook Reservation in September, again for his Eagle Scout service project. It leads to a panoramic view of the Spencer Brook wetlands. The Trails Committee greatly enjoyed working with these young men and thanks them for their additions to the town’s trail system.

Interfacing with other boards and committees – We are working with the Carlisle Conservation Foundation on plans for potential new trails in conservation efforts for the Sorli Farm on Westford Street and Woodhaven Farm on Prospect Street.

Finances – At year’s end there was \$13,596 in the Trail Maps revolving fund, \$8,685 in the CPA account, \$921 in the Trails Grant account, and \$400 in the Gift account. The end date for expending funds from the CPA grant was extended to 2018 by annual Town Meeting. The Gift account was created this year for a donation from a Carlisle mountain bike group.

Acknowledgement - The Trails Committee would especially like to thank the many volunteers from the community who have helped in our trail projects through the year. We also wish to acknowledge the unnamed volunteers who quietly maintain trails in their neighborhoods without direct involvement of the Trails Committee. Without volunteers,

the Town wouldn't have its wonderful trail system.

Current members of the Trails Committee are Alan Ankers (chair), Henry Cox, Louise Hara (clerk), Marc Lamere (treasurer), Warren Spence, Steve Tobin (vice chair), and Bert Willard (secretary). Report submitted by Steve Tobin.