

Annual Report for 2016 Carlisle Trails Committee

The Trails Committee in 2016 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 six public walks this year. A January full moon hike at Foss Farm drew 12 people on a cold snowy night. In April Dr. Bryan Windmiller lead a vernal pool walk at the Greenough Land. A Riverfest walk in June from Foss Farm to Greenough had 16 participants on a beautiful sunny afternoon. The weather was also superb for our annual Double Sundae Sunday Saunter on Old Home Day in June; 23 people started at Kimball’s and 11 finished the full 7 miles. On a lovely fall day in October, 21 people walked the Town Forest, viewing the new intersection markers and the new Coyote Rock trail. The annual post-Thanksgiving walk was on Two Rod Road from Malcolm Meadows to the Circle Trail in Concord. 15 people enjoyed the camaraderie and new trail markers despite cold temperatures and light rain.

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 2017. Individual trail maps are available on the Trails Committee web site, carlisletrails.pbworks.com. The web site, 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. Work is underway to create a Trails Committee page on the Town’s web site. Volunteer Kim Schive (Trekker #17) maintains 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). These locations will be shown in the new trail book maps. 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. 21 markers were completed and installed in the Davis Corridor and Greenough this year. All 141 markers for the trail system have now had numbers routed and painted (thanks to high school volunteer Erin Cox for most of the letter painting). 93 markers are in line for illustration at the school. We made a major effort to install sign posts this year (53 finished) and only 28 remain to be done.

There were two new Carlisle Trekker Awards earned this year for hiking all of Carlisle’s trails: Sarah Sutton (#32) and Christopher LeStage (#33).

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

In addition, we invited volunteers to help in public work days in April (10 people), May (12 people), June (24 people on National Trails Day), and September (16 people). Activities included installing sign posts, repairing bridges, rerouting trails, and brush clearing. We have benefitted from many CCHS students and Boy Scouts doing community service.

After winter beaver flooding severely damaged the Otter Slide trail, we worked with Cons Com and the State Park on a repair plan to add four bridges and fill in many sinkholes. This plan is slowly going through the permitting process.

Other maintenance projects included repairing boardwalks in Great Meadows and Greenough, mowing trails in Great Meadows and the Town Forest, and clearing vegetation from the canoe landing at the Elliott Preserve.

Trail markers and signs were added to the Highwater Trail in the Davis Corridor. Two new wooden signs were created by volunteer Roy Herold using his new computer-controlled milling machine. At the request of a neighbor, we added signage and cleared brush at the trail entrance on Aberdeen Drive. The plaque at the Benfield wildlife platform was replaced after errors were discovered.

Three more wooden trail benches built by Committee member Bert Willard were installed this year at Greenough, Benfield Hill, and Spencer Brook Reservation, bringing the total to five. They have been well received by trail users.

The committee is looking for a new place to store lumber after being notified by the US Fish & Wildlife Service that the O'Rourke barn used for this purpose since 1998 is scheduled to be demolished in 2017.

Preserving trails and new trails – (1) 29-acre Woodhaven Farm on Prospect Street was sold and protected with a Conservation Restriction that includes an easement for a new trail. The Committee has been exploring trail location options but needs the drought to break to determine the best trail location through low, potentially wet ground. Committee members led two fundraising walks on the property in February. When surveying the property it was found that Hal's Boardwalk was located on Woodhaven Farm, not the Town's Davis Corridor. The new owners deeded that section to the Town in a complicated process guided by Committee member Marc Lamere. (2) Town Meeting voted to purchase a Conservation Restriction on 20 acres of Sorli Farm on the south side of Westford Street. This includes a short new scenic trail to the Ryan Conservation Land owned by CCF. The trail will be marked after the transaction is finalized in early 2017. (3) The town will be acquiring new conservation land as part of an open space development at 81 Russell Street that includes a planned loop trail. As a result of a neighbor lawsuit, the court ruled that the public could not use a proposed parking area for trail access. Consequently, a substantial wetland will need to be crossed to reach the loop trail from Russell Street. The developer pledged \$5,000 to help offset the cost of a boardwalk. Trail planning will continue in 2017 after the Town owns the land. (4) The Lions Gate development on West Street was approved by the Planning Board including a

trail easement to the adjoining 11.5-acre Pannell Land owned by CCF. (5) The trail from Banta Davis to Fox Hill through the Goff property was re-routed to accommodate new group housing, including a new opening through a stone wall and hedgerow.

Interfacing with other boards and committees – We provided input to the Estabrook Access committee in Concord on public parking access to the Estabrook Woods, through Carlisle’s representative to the committee, Nick D’Arbeloff. That committee’s final report to the Concord Selectmen included no parking access from Carlisle, as desired.

Finances – At year’s end there was \$15,366 in the Trail Maps revolving fund, \$8,100 in the CPA account, \$921 in the Trails Grant account, and \$749 in the Gift account. \$349 was donated to the Gift account by 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, Henry Cox, Louise Hara (clerk), Marc Lamere (treasurer and chair-elect), Warren Spence, Steve Tobin (chair), and Bert Willard (secretary). Roy Herold has been a very active volunteer. Report submitted by Steve Tobin.