

Annual Report for 2006 Carlisle Trails Committee

The highlight of the year was completing two boardwalks on the River Trail, delayed almost a year by floods. In April we pounded in one set of support posts during a brief respite from high water. The rest were done on Sept. 10. Two weeks later, 25 soggy but determined volunteers waited out steady morning rains under tarps. When the sky brightened after lunch, out came the power tools and the boardwalks took shape. By 6 p.m. the proud crew was lined up on a brand new boardwalk for a *Mosquito* photo.

The Trails Committee in 2006 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 to familiarize townspeople with the trail network. Our second annual pre-Superbowl walk in February took a group of 28 hikers around the Towle Land on a warm, sunny afternoon. The walk was preceded by a short talk on winter hike safety. In April we again cosponsored an Earth Day vernal pool walk with the Conservation Commission on State Park land across the street from the Cranberry Bog. Wetlands biologist Chris Kavalauskas delighted the children (and adults) with the rich life of this small pond. In June, as part of the regional Riverfest celebration, we led a group of 17 around the Greenough Land, with a mid-walk picnic at Greenough Pond. October's fall foliage walk was a 5-mile loop from Malcolm Meadows to Punkatasset Hill in Estabrook Woods, via the Poole Swamp, Rockstrom, and Two Rod Road trails. Finally, the annual after-Thanksgiving walk attracted 37 people on a sunny, upper-50's afternoon following a very rainy Thanksgiving day. We did a 3-mile loop from the end of Estabrook Road, stopping at several historic and natural points of interest in Estabrook Woods. Highlights were some dicey stream crossings and Henry Cox's hand-made whipped cream for pumpkin pie at the after-walk refreshments.

Trail maintenance – Committee members and many other volunteers participated in trail clearings throughout the year. Trail clearings were undertaken at O'Rourke/Great Meadows, Great Brook Farm State Park, Davis Corridor, Sachs Greenway, Bartlett Farm, Greenough, Towle, Clark Farm, Poole Swamp, and the Town Forest. New trail signs were installed at Towle with the help of a high school student doing community service. We installed a roof on the Conant Land sign kiosk. Much of the decking on the Greenough Pond bridge was replaced.

A new boardwalk was built in the Greenough Land on Sept. 24, the day after the River Trail boardwalks, at a small stream crossing just below the large private field. A group of 19 volunteers hauled in all the materials and nailed together the 40-foot structure. This was our first project funded by CPA money approved by Town Meeting last year.

Some progress was made in the boardwalk flooding by beavers near the O'Rourke farm. In May, 11 volunteers built a second story bridge over the beaver dam, using the original

boardwalk as a base. Not only does it get hikers across the beaver pond, but it makes a nice beaver observation platform. “Beaver deceiver” pipes are being tried to keep the water level tolerable to both hikers and beavers.

The Old Morse Road trail is passable again after new culverts were installed this fall near the end of Mill Pond Lane. Thanks are due to Sylvia Willard for keeping the project moving, the Cons Com, DPW, neighbors, and Carl Hanscom. Beavers almost immediately threw up a dam downstream of the culvert. Instead of crossing a stream, Old Morse Road now bisects a pond. So far the water level has remained two inches below the top of the culvert.

Preserving trails – Two developments planned as conservation clusters will be developing and preserving trails for public use. The Greystone Estates development on Cross Street was approved by the Planning Board. Plans include a trail system and boardwalks to be installed by the developer, Bill Costello, a first for Carlisle. Louise Hara was the driving force behind these trails, with extensive input from the neighborhood and Trails Committee. The permitting process has begun for another parcel off Rutland Street which includes part of the old Rangeway Road trail. Neighbors and the Trails Committee have been giving input to the developer and Planning Board. The intent is to develop the land as a Conservation Cluster, with trails through new conservation land linking to Rangeway Road, which will remain as a trail.

Interfacing with other boards and committees – The Selectmen appointed a new Bruce Freeman Trail committee to advise them on the proposed rail trail. The Trails Committee helped clear Carlisle’s section of the abandoned rail line in October. We have been working with the Land Stewardship Committee, supplying trail maps for inclusion in baseline property assessments and defining needs for trail mowing in fields. We took Bedford trail groups on a tour of our boardwalks to help them plan their own loop on the other side of the Concord River. We met with the Chelmsford trails group to standardize trail signs in the Cranberry Bog property in both towns.

Finances – At year’s end there was \$2,025 in the Trail Maps revolving fund and \$12,932 in the CPA Capital Projects fund.

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.

The Trails Committee lost one of its pillars when Verna Gilbert retired this year. Verna was an outstanding secretary, e-mail coordinator, and bridge to the *Mosquito*. The committee was happy to welcome Kevin Smith as its newest member. Current members of the Trails Committee are Henry Cox, George Fardy, Louise Hara, Marc Lamere, Steve Tobin (chair), Kevin Smith, and Bert Willard (secretary). Report submitted by Steve Tobin.

