

Annual Report for 2010 Carlisle Trails Committee

The big event of 2010 for the Trails Committee was the publication of the first all-color version of the Trails in Carlisle book, including all-new digital maps. The book marked the 25th anniversary of the Trails Committee and the 50th anniversary of the Carlisle Conservation Foundation, which funded the project as a gift to the town. It was a huge undertaking, with major parts played by David Freedman of CCF in graphic design, Kevin Smith in map creation, and Louise Hara in text creation. The rest of the committee joined in editing and fact checking. The book was unveiled at Old Home Day, where 121 copies were sold, out of a printing of 2000. Feedback was very positive; one enthusiastic reader even came to a Trails Committee meeting to get his copy autographed! Copies are available at the Town Clerk's office and at Fern's Country Store.

The Trails Committee in 2010 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 seven public walks to familiarize townspeople with the trail network. A moonlight walk at Foss Farm in January attracted 13 hikers on an 18-degree night; highlights were a moon dog in the sky over the Foss fields and a new beaver lodge. In April we cosponsored an Earth Day vernal pool walk with the Conservation Commission at the Greenough Land. Wetlands biologist Chris Kavalauskas revealed the rich life of this ephemeral pond to 20 attendees. On Old Home Day in June, 15 walkers joined the 7-mile Double Sundae Sunday Saunter with stops at both of Carlisle's ice cream stands. It started hot and ended in pouring rain. As part of the Carlisle Conservation Foundation's 50th anniversary celebration in September at the Spencer Brook Reservation, two walks were offered. 28 people walked the new Marion's Trail in CCF's Ben's Woods and Twin Peaks Trail in CCF's Benfield Hill property, with a hilltop picnic lunch. 50 people joined a walk to the Town's Benfield Conservation Land to view the site of the proposed wildlife viewing platform on the edge of Spencer Brook. On a rainy October afternoon, 31 mushroom enthusiasts joined Kay Fairweather for a walk at Foss Farm. Just after another rain shower cleared, 21 folks explored the State Park and Chelmsford's appropriately named Thanksgiving Forest for the annual post-Thanksgiving walk.

For the first time, the Town's new color trail maps are now available on the Trails Committee web site, carlisletrails.pbworks.com. The web site, linked to the Town's web site, also includes information on the Carlisle Trekker Award, notices for upcoming walks and work days, and a problem report form.

Seven people earned the Carlisle Trekker Award this year for hiking all of Carlisle's trails: Bert Willard in January, Liz and Steve Loutrel in July, and four members of the Stevenson family – Caroline, Catherine, Douglas Jr. and Douglas Sr. in October. It is noteworthy that Selectman Doug Stevenson first proposed the idea of the Trekker Award to the Trails Committee in 2007 as a way to increase interest in the Town's trails and

conservation lands, so the idea has come full circle.

Trail maintenance –Record rains and flooding in March and April kept the Trails Committee busy in the River Meadows Reservation lands along the Concord River. In April, members in chest waders retrieved a major Greenough Land boardwalk that was floating away and secured it to steel fence posts until the water receded. In two buggy May work days, 40 volunteers, including 22 high school students, cleared trails of flotsam ranging in size from small twigs to large trees, clipped back vegetation, moved boardwalks back to their proper locations and cabled them down, built one new 30-foot boardwalk in Great Meadows, rebuilt two others, and replaced broken decking boards on a bridge. In October, new trail markers were installed in Great Meadows Wildlife Refuge trails. In November, the last Greenough Land boardwalk was secured with steel cables.

In May, we had a major construction project on the new trail created last year in the Hanover Hill development, building a 75-foot boardwalk and a 30-foot bridge over a stream. 17 volunteers provided the labor, the materials were provided by Rob West of Wilkins Hill Realty (the subdivision developer), and the Trails Committee obtained a wetlands permit from Cons Com. In September, we built a log bridge and installed wooden signs on the Twin Peaks Trail. In October, we repaired the boardwalk from Spalding Field to the Banta Davis Land so it is once again passable (last year it was under water from beaver activity, but apparently they were washed out to sea in the March floods). We also worked with CCF in trail and brush clearing on Spencer Brook Reservation in advance of their 50th anniversary celebration.

Also working with CCF, we developed plans and obtained a wetland permit for a new boardwalk and wildlife observation platform next to Spencer Brook in the Town's Benfield Conservation Land. The plans were engineered by non-CTC volunteers Steve Hinton (CCF), Alan Ankers, and Stew Roberts, and funding is being provided by CCF. Based on input from Native American representatives, the platform will be elliptical rather than rectangular, adding some challenge to design and construction. Due to the depth of muck in the marsh, we are using helical piers to support the structure, our first time using this technology. The piers were installed by Solid Earth Technologies and lumber was delivered in December; carpentry work is planned for the winter while the marsh is frozen. Building in winter weather will be another new experience for the committee.

In addition to these major projects, Committee members and other volunteers participated in trail clearings throughout the year on all parcels of conservation land.

Preserving trails and new trails – Marion's Trail in CCF's Ben's Woods property was laid out, cut, and marked this year, in time for the CCF 50th anniversary. It is named after Ben Benfield's wife, who created the first trails in this area. It starts and ends at different points on West Street, and will eventually connect with a large area of conservation land in Acton. Another new trail is planned in the Chestnut Estates development off Rutland Street; the committee did exploration and flagging in December. Working with a

landowner in Carlisle and Westford, trail access over private land was granted to connect existing trails in the MacAfee and Holmes-Avery lands. Trail access was also granted to Sleigh Road in Westford, with only a short sidewalk connection to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. The committee also did some field exploration for possible trail routes around the private Flannery property between the Sachs Greenway and Carr Land, which was closed to walkers this year after abuses by some users.

Interfacing with other boards and committees – The committee provided input to the Cons Com for the Open Space and Recreation Plan update. We worked with the Rec Com on options for replacing the Spalding Field to Banta Davis boardwalk with a more substantial structure that could accommodate school cross country races. We met with other conservation boards in May, organized by the Land Stewardship Committee. Also with other boards, we walked a parcel of land on South Street coming out of Chapter 61B, to develop a recommendation to the selectmen about possible Town purchase. We suggested names for the trails and parcels of former Benfield lands that were adopted by CCF. As described earlier, we also worked with CCF on the new trail book, on their 50th anniversary celebration, and on the Benfield wildlife platform project. We met with Susan Russo of the US Fish and Wildlife Service in November to discuss updates to the trail maintenance agreement between the Town and USFWS for Great Meadows Wildlife Refuge.

Finances – After Marc Lamere's fine presentation at Town Meeting, the committee was voted \$15,000 of CPA funds for materials for trail projects over the next five years. In addition, at year's end there was \$4,552 in the Trail Maps revolving fund and \$921 in the outside grant account.

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.

Special Remembrance - A.E. (Ben) Benfield passed away at the age of 99 on December 8. As the father of conservation in Carlisle, Ben was directly responsible for Carlisle's public wild places and trails that we all love and enjoy so much. He was also a friend of the Carlisle Trails Committee in its first days, leading us on tours of the trails on his lands and fact-checking the trail locations in the first Trails in Carlisle maps. He was an example of public service and far-sighted vision for all of us.

Current members of the Trails Committee are Henry Cox, George Fardy, Louise Hara, Marc Lamere, Kevin Smith (chair), Steve Tobin, and Bert Willard (secretary). Report submitted by Steve Tobin.