

## **Annual Report for 2011 Carlisle Trails Committee**

There were two major events for the Trails Committee in 2011, one planned and one not. From January to April we undertook our most ambitious construction project ever, the wildlife viewing platform on the edge of Spencer Brook in the Benfield Conservation Land. Scheduling around snowstorms, working in deep snow, and hurrying to finish before Spencer Brook thawed, the 7-weekend project was always challenging and an unforgettable experience. Special thanks go to the Carlisle Conservation Foundation's donors for funding, to CCF's Steve Hinton for masterminding the project and participating in every aspect of the construction, and Alan Ankers for design and construction help.

Our second big "event" was the double-whammy of Hurricane Irene and the October snowstorm, both of which brought down huge numbers of trees and branches on the trails. With help from many volunteers, we spent most weekends from September through November clearing storm damage.

The Trails Committee in 2011 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. In March, a near-record 67 people took a night walk from Spencer Brook Reservation to the newly-completed Benfield wildlife platform, arriving just as the "Super" full moon rose over Spencer Brook. It was a completely clear and magical night. In April we cosponsored an Earth Day vernal pool walk with the Conservation Commission at the Conant Land, where a population explosion of fairy shrimp captivated the 22 attendees. On a rainy June day, as part of Riverfest, 10 people walked to the Benfield platform. On Old Home Day in July, 25 walkers joined the 7-mile Double Sundae Sunday Saunter with stops at both of Carlisle's ice cream stands, finding relief from the muggy weather. In October, walks were offered on two weekends at River Road Farm to view Pagey's Preserve, proposed for acquisition as conservation land. 16 people came on a rainy day and 60 when the weather was nice. The annual post-Thanksgiving walk at the Greenough Land was blessed with a warm, sunny afternoon, and 32 people took the opportunity to walk off their stuffing.

Our guide to the Town's conservation lands, "Trails in Carlisle", is available at the Town Hall and Ferns Country Store. Individual trail maps are available on the Trails Committee web site, [carlisletrails.pbworks.com](http://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.

Marilyn Cugini earned the Carlisle Trekker Award in December for hiking all of Carlisle's trails, becoming the twelfth person to do so. She kept a blog of her experiences, and presented the committee members with photo notecards from her walks.

Trail maintenance – After the snowy winter, a public work day in April cleaned up trail damage all over town. Particularly noteworthy, chest waders were involved in removing fallen trees from River Meadow Brook, where they had rerouted the flow and undercut part of the Otter Slide Trail. Another public work day in June cleared the Sachs Greenway and Hanover trails. High school Earth Science students helped clear trails in Great Meadows and replace broken boardwalk boards. As noted above, the committee and other volunteers cleared nearly every trail in town in September and again in November. The trail to the Benfield platform was mowed twice, and a steel post was installed to prevent unauthorized vehicular access to the Benfield Conservation Land.

Trail markers were put up on the Hart Farm trail and the Holmes-Avery trail. Wooden signs have been made for the Kolansky trail easement.

Preserving trails and new trails – Two Boy Scouts created new trails this year for their Eagle service projects: Brendan Nunan from Church Street to the Banta-Davis trail, and Anthony Perugini in the new Chestnut Estates conservation land. We expect to extend Anthony's trail into the recently-surveyed Mannis Land next year. Sheldon Kolansky's trail easement through his property was recorded. It connects trails in the MacAfee land, Holmes-Avery land, and Sleigh Road in Westford, giving access to the Bruce Freeman rail trail. Working with CCF and the Sudbury Valley Trustees, a trail was laid out and cut on the Elliott's land to allow access to Pagey's Preserve, proposed for protection as conservation land. This included building a small bridge. We met with a Land Steward from Acton and walked a future trail link from Ben's Woods to extensive conservation land in Acton. We also met with Alan French of the Bay Circuit Alliance to discuss routing part of the Bay Circuit Trail through Carlisle. We met with neighbors, the Conservation Commission, the Land Stewardship Committee, and the police chief to discuss a potential new trail access into Foss Farm from the intersection of River Road and Bedford Road. We also met with Steve Carlin, the manager of Great Brook Farm State Park, to discuss his plans for new trail parking on Lowell Road with future trail connections to the Fern Loop, the Erickson Loop, and the town's Gage Woodlot.

Interfacing with other boards and committees –We worked with the Rec Com on a CPA proposal to replace the Spalding Field to Banta Davis boardwalk, but it was tabled for legal reasons. We met with other town conservation boards in April, organized by the Land Stewardship Committee. Member Kevin Smith is part of the inter-board committee drafting rules for use of Other Power-Driven Mobility Devices on trails in town conservation lands. Committee members Louise Hara and Kevin Smith are part of the group working on the Town's new Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Finances – At year's end there was \$7,275 in the Trail Maps revolving fund and \$15,000 in the CPA 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.

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