

Annual Report for 2012 Carlisle Trails Committee

For the second year in a row, the Trails Committee and other volunteers spent the month of November cleaning up trails after a major storm, this time Superstorm Sandy. While there was tree damage all over town, the Town Forest was devastated, with over 100 very large pine trees, some over 100 years old, uprooted or snapped off. This was the most concentrated damage the Trails Committee has ever seen. In several spots, huge tangles of downed trees made it almost impossible to locate the old trail. The Town Forest trails were finally made passable again in a marathon work day with 16 people and 8 chain saws. Other major casualties of the storm were a boardwalk on the Red Tail Trail in Great Meadows that was crushed by a falling tree and had to be rebuilt, and one of the most scenic trees in town, an ancient multi-trunked pine on the Otter Slide trail, that was pushed over by two other enormous pines. State and federal professional trail crews also cleared large numbers of downed trees in the State Park and Great Meadows.

The Trails Committee in 2012 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 to familiarize townspeople with the trail network. A January full moon night hike at the Cranberry Bog drew 77 people on a perfectly clear, balmy 50-degree night. Two April walks to view the Elliott land, in advance of a Town Meeting vote on Pagey's Preserve, drew 11 people on a rainy day and 35 on a sunny day. On a nice June afternoon, as part of Riverfest, 32 people walked from the Spencer Brook reservation to the Benfield platform, returning for watermelon and lemonade. On Old Home Day in July, 30 walkers joined the 7-mile Double Sundae Sunday Saunter with stops at both of Carlisle's ice cream stands, finding relief from the hot weather. The annual post-Thanksgiving walk from Foss Farm to the Greenough Land and back was blessed with a glorious warm, sunny afternoon, and 38 people took the opportunity to walk off their stuffing.

Our guide book 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. 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.

This was a record year for Trekker Awards, with 7 people earning the award for hiking all of Carlisle's trails: Jane Anderson and Marjorie Johnson in January, Helen and Roy Herold and Kim Schive in October, and Sylvia Willard and Dottie Hall in November. The total count is now 19.

Trail maintenance – In addition to committee members clearing trails throughout the year as problems were reported, we invited volunteers to help in 7 public work days:

June 9 (16 people): Chestnut Estates and Mannis Land
Aug. 5 (14 people): Elliott, O'Rourke, Two Rod, Sachs Greenway
Sep. 23 (16 people): Great Meadows, Towle, Two Rod
Sep. 30 (10 people): Great Meadows
Oct. 21 (23 people): Foss Farm
Nov. 11 (17 people): Carlisle Pines, Greenough, Town Forest, Conant, Otter Slide, Cutter's Ridge, Spalding to Banta Davis
Nov. 18 (16 people): Town Forest

Other maintenance projects included replacing a small bridge on the Blueberry Trail in Greenough, replacing numerous rotted boardwalk boards in Great Meadows, and chest wader work removing fallen trees from River Meadow Brook, where they had rerouted the flow and threatened to undercut the Otter Slide Trail. New beaver activity flooded the Mist Trail in Great Meadows; we are waiting another season to see how bad it gets before attempting a solution.

Preserving trails and new trails – New trails were laid out by the committee in Chestnut Estates and the Mannis Land, connecting to the Rangeway Trail. On a public work day in June, 16 volunteers cut the trails, named the Tupelo Trail and the Laurel Loop, adding 1.2 miles to the town's trail system. Boy Scout Matt Gorecki created a new trail at Foss Farm this year for his Eagle service project, connecting the Woods Loop to Bedford Road near the intersection with River Road. The committee put up trail markers and named it the Pitch Pine Trail. Also at Foss Farm, the Trails Committee received Cons Com approval to build a "Bridge to Nowhere Bypass" trail and bridge, connecting the parking lot to the South Field Loop. In an October public work day, 23 people helped remove the old concrete bumpers extending from the Bridge to Nowhere into the wetland, set 5 of them in the new bridge location, and cleared the trail. Bridge construction is scheduled for the spring of 2013. The two new trails at Foss will be part of a larger loop planned to connect to the new CCF Bose land by the Rte 225 bridge and to Pagey's Preserve on Skelton Road, when that becomes conservation land.

Interfacing with other boards and committees –We met with other town conservation boards in December, organized by the Land Stewardship Committee. Member Kevin Smith was part of the inter-board committee that drafted rules for use of Other Power-Driven Mobility Devices on trails in town conservation lands, adopted by Cons Com. Committee members Louise Hara and Kevin Smith were heavily involved all year in preparing the Town's new Open Space and Recreation Plan, Louise as Chair and Kevin as map maker. The Trails Committee contributed report sections on accomplishments and goals, and a list of unprotected trails in town. Louise met with representatives from Acton to coordinate future trail connections between the two towns. She also met with manager Steve Carlin at Great Brook Farm State Park to view the new trails west of Lowell Street, which can provide potential trail access to the town's Gage Woodlot. Committee member Marc Lamere, also of the Planning Board, was tasked with evaluating "Trails End" on Long Ridge Road as a Conservation Cluster with a potential trail network (later withdrawn). Also a member of the Conservation Restriction Advisory Committee, Marc monitored four trail-containing CRs. The committee met

with Alan French in February on possible layouts of the Bay Circuit Trail through Carlisle.

Finances – At year's end there was \$9,020 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.

Kevin C. Smith stepped down from the committee this year. He will be sorely missed, but continues to provide expert digital mapping support. Two new members, Alan Ankers and Warren Spence, were enthusiastically welcomed to the committee.

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