

## **Annual Report for 2022 Carlisle Trails Committee**

As the Covid-19 pandemic ebbed in 2022, the Trails Committee returned to a more normal schedule of public walks and workdays. Committee meetings remained virtual, but we completed some major boardwalk projects with volunteer help.

Throughout the year the Committee 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 four public walks after cancelling the January full moon walk during a Covid surge. In April, biologist Bryan Windmiller led 15 participants on a vernal pool exploration at the Conant Land. In June, 15 people walked from Foss Farm to the Bedford Road canoe launch to the Elliott Preserve for Riverfest. We had visitors from Arlington, Chelmsford, Littleton, and Medford. The Double Sundae Sunday Saunter on Old Home Day weekend attracted 26 people who walked all or part of the 7-mile loop between Carlisle’s ice cream stands on a hot day. The committee had a booth at Old Home Day where 15 trail map books were sold and we talked to many people about trails. On the day after Thanksgiving, 20 people walked the Towle and Greystone trails. Rain was forecast but held off for us.

Volunteer webmaster Lisa Ankers maintains the Trails Committee’s web site, [carlisletrails.pbworks.com](http://carlisletrails.pbworks.com), which links to the Town website ([carlislema.gov/189/Trails-Committee](http://carlislema.gov/189/Trails-Committee)). Individual trail maps are available on the websites, as well as information on the Carlisle Trekker Award and notices for upcoming walks and workdays. Roy Herold keeps Carlisle’s trails up to date as they appear in online Open Street Maps.

The 2018 edition of the Trails Committee’s guidebook to the Town’s conservation lands, “Trails in Carlisle”, is available at the Town Hall.

This year 5 people earned their Carlisle Trekker awards for hiking all of Carlisle’s trails: Angela Smith (#64), Henry, Karin, and Justin Kliger (#65-67), and Tim Downing (#68). Others completed their walks but were unable to complete the requirement for a trails service project because of pandemic limits on group gatherings.

The committee’s multi-year project to add uniquely numbered intersection markers at all major trail junctions in town got restarted after pandemic restrictions eased at the Carlisle School. 12 markers were completed and installed. 14 new markers were given to the Art Club and we are hopeful that the final 17 markers will be completed in 2023.

8<sup>th</sup> grader Charlotte Stevens posted signs at trail heads asking walkers to remove invasive plants as part of her Civics project.

Trail maintenance and construction – The Trails Committee worked with Carlisle Boy Scout Troop 135 on a major project to replace the rotting decking on four bridges along Cross Street’s paved pathway. Scout Adam Selig managed the project to rebuild the first two bridges in September for his Eagle award. Alan Ankers from the Trails Committee managed reconstruction of the final two bridges in October. Each project took two days of deconstruction and construction work by many Scout and Trails volunteers after many hours of planning. Materials were paid for, and construction debris was removed by the Town’s DPW.

Trails Committee volunteers also replaced about 30 rotting boards on the large bridge connecting Spalding Field with Banta Davis in 4 separate workdays throughout the year as holes developed. Materials were supplied by the Recreation Commission, which originally contracted to build the bridge. Trails and RecCom are discussing how to do a comprehensive rather than piecemeal repair as the decking continues to fail. The bridge has 606 decking boards.

Some of the Committee’s goals for the year were to improve trails that are chronically wet and muddy in the spring. Good progress was made on the southern end of the Davis Trail, with the addition of 4 “duckboards”, steppingstones, and crushed stone. Some progress was made on Two Rod Road with the addition of a duckboard and steppingstones but much remains to be done. Dan Wells and Sylvia Willard of the Conservation Commission kindly showed us which areas are wetlands requiring a permit and which are not. We are still working on an approach for the Malcolm Land between the inner and outer loops, which will require a wetland permit.

We purchased \$1,530 of lumber in April for duckboards, bench seats, and signposts. In addition to the work above, duckboards were installed on the Towle Inner Loop (Beaver Bypass) and the Tupelo Trail in the Rangeway Conservation Land.

Throughout the year the committee cleared numerous trees that fell across trails on almost every parcel of conservation land. The Google Docs spreadsheet the committee uses to keep track of fallen trees had 165 entries for the year, compared to 153, 155, and 167 in preceding years.

The committee mowed trails including Red Tail, Piggery, Beaver Loop, and River trails at Great Meadows, Bisbee, Davis Corridor, Elliott, Foss, Fox Hill, Malcolm, Otter Slide, Sachs Greenway, Spencer Brook, Towle, and Two Rod Road. Most trails were mowed multiple times through the summer and fall. Mowing trails at Great Meadows became much easier when Steve Tobin was allowed to use a US Fish & Wildlife Service brush mower. We had welcome help mowing from Jonathan DeKock at Foss, Judy Asarkof at Towle, Luke Ascolillo at Woodhaven, and David Hart at the Benfield Conservation Land.

Other maintenance projects included re-decking a 16-foot bridge on the Red Tail Trail, scrubbing slippery scum off a bridge on the Rockstrom Trail, replacing broken boards on the bridge across Greenough Pond, adding friction tape to the steps at the Russell

Conservation Land, removing a Great Meadows sign kiosk at the Greenough end of the Red Tail Trail that was destroyed by vandals, and replacing broken signposts at Bisbee, Greenough, and Two Rod Road.

We sponsored a volunteer trail workday in April for the first time since the Covid pandemic started. 18 volunteers split up into four work groups, doing brush clearing in Great Meadows and Poole Swamp, hardening the Davis Trail, and enlarging stone wall openings at Benfield Conservation Land.

After septic system construction was done on the Benfield Conservation Land, the crushed stone in the cart path used for truck access was left in place. Previously the cart path was wet and muddy in the spring. There were complaints about the difficulty of walking and pushing strollers over the coarse stones. The Committee tried raking the larger stones out of the middle of the path leading up to the Cedar Loop Trail to make a better walking surface. More work remains to be done.

In late fall, Committee members raked leaves and pine needles off all the boardwalks and bridges to prevent rot. In a successful experiment, Warren Spence hung rakes and brooms at several boardwalks with signs asking trail users to help.

Three trailside wooden benches were installed this year at the Cranberry Bog.

The Committee worked with Aberdeen Drive homeowners, Great Brook Farm State Park, and the New England Mountain Bike Association on a trail easement issue. In a nutshell, no one realized the 1980s public access easement did not allow bike riding until recently when bike riding in the Park became very popular. Changes in Park signage and notices through NEMBA were made to get the word out that public access through Aberdeen Drive does not include bikes.

A new fence and additional signage were installed at Woodhaven Farm to address problems with off-leash dogs on the Woodhaven Trail, apparently successfully. The Carlisle Conservation Foundation (CCF) and Sudbury Valley Trustees, co-holders of a Conservation Restriction on the property, worked with the owner on this project.

Preserving trails and new trails – (1) The new Jack & Betty Valentine Trail was completed through the former Valentine property, connecting Acton Street to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail in Acton. The trail, which starts in Carlisle but is mostly in Acton, is part of the Bay Circuit Trail. After a long process, the Acton Conservation Commission issued wetland permits for two boardwalks. The boardwalks were constructed by volunteers during 4 workdays in September and October. The CCF paid for the materials and led the project with help from the Trails Committee. (2) New trails in the Woodward Village conservation land will be opened once the housing construction is complete, expected in 2023. (3) The Planning Board had preliminary discussions about a proposed Conservation Cluster at 75 West Street. It would include trail access from West Street to the Ryan Land owned by CCF.

Interfacing with other boards and committees – The Trails Committee and the Master Plan Steering Committee had discussions on the wording of tasks for the Trails Committee in the Master Plan that was adopted. The Trails Committee supported Cons Com’s request for CPA funding to repair the Cranberry Bog dam. The Committee worked with Great Brook Farm State Park Supervisor John Aziz on signage and repairs. Steve Tobin volunteers at Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge; he was trained on their DR Brush Mower and participated in an invasive species survey. Marc Lamere is the committee’s representative on the Conservation Restriction Advisory Committee. The Committee again worked with Jack Huntress, organizer of the MTB50 mountain bike ride, to be sure the route was passable and legal for bike use. The October ride was successful with 60 riders and no public complaints.

Finances – At year’s end there were \$13,431 in the Trail Maps revolving fund, \$9,992 in the CPA account, \$1,053 in the Trails Grant account, and \$14,228 in the Gifts account. \$1,022 was donated to the Gifts account by a Carlisle mountain bike group after their Carlisle riding tour.

Acknowledgement - The Trails Committee would especially like to thank the many volunteers from the community who have helped in our trail projects throughout 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. We also thank Lisa Ankers for maintaining the committee’s web site.

Current members of the Trails Committee are Alan Ankers (vice-chair and secretary), Chris Chiapella, Roy Herold, Charlene Hinton (treasurer), Marc Lamere, Warren Spence (clerk), and Steve Tobin (chair).

Report submitted by Steve Tobin.