

CARLISLE TRAILS COMMITTEE

Memo

To: Carlisle Conservation Commission
From: Alan Ankers, Chair, Carlisle Trails Committee
Re: Twin Peaks Boardwalk RDA
Date: May 3, 2024

At the April 25 meeting of the Conservation Commission, the Trails Committee presented a Request for Determination (WPA Form 1) related to two proposed boardwalk crossings of intermittent streams on the Twin Peaks property, owned by the Carlisle Conservation Foundation, off West Street in Carlisle, MA. Comments from Mass DEP reviewer Alicia Geilen were forwarded to us by our Conservation Administrator Sylvia Willard. We have the following comments in response:

We visited the site of the proposed boardwalks on April 28 with wetlands biologist Dan Wells (also the chair of the Conservation Commission), and he determined the following:

- Boardwalk 1 (the longer one) is altering twelve lineal feet of bank of intermittent stream where the supports rest on the ground. There is no Bordering Vegetated Wetland in the footprint of the boardwalk.
- Boardwalk 2 (the shorter one) is altering six lineal feet of bank of intermittent stream where the ends rest on the ground. There is a small area (approximately 4 square feet) of Bordering Vegetated Wetland immediately adjacent to the boardwalk, but the boardwalk will not touch nor impact the BVW.
- In both cases, adding boardwalks will improve the resource area quality by preventing siltation and erosion due to people walking through the mud there at present. The smaller boardwalk is upstream of the certified vernal pool, so preventing the erosion and siltation will improve the water quality of the vernal pool.

The larger of the two proposed boardwalks is twenty feet long. About half of that length is the intermittent stream that it will cross; the remainder of the area under the boardwalk is a well-worn existing trail, with minimal vegetation. While the boardwalk would certainly shade the ground, it would not be shading any significant amount of vegetation.

Raising the boardwalk four feet above the ground is not practical for this application. As the ends need to be at ground level for the boardwalk to be functional, it would require ramps fifty feet or more in length on each side of the stream crossing. Because of the height, guardrails would also be required. This would create a monstrous structure that is visually jarring and simply inappropriate for this small stream crossing in a quiet woodland setting.

If raising the height to four feet were the only available option, we would likely choose to abandon this trail. Unfortunately, this would almost certainly have unintended consequences, as people would likely continue to use it and create their own ad-hoc stream crossing by placing random logs in and across the stream, which would certainly have an adverse effect on the stream and the creatures living in it. Foot traffic through the wet areas along the edge of the stream would also cause more damage than the boardwalk.

We would like to propose a compromise that we feel will best address the needs of the trail and at the same time provide protection to the pool, the stream and its edges. While keeping the boardwalk close to the ground as planned, we will reduce its width from 4'-0" to 2'-8". This will reduce safety and accessibility but allow passage for most trail users. We will provide additional mitigation by planting some native shrubs at strategic locations near the trail close to the longer boardwalk - (2) High Bush Blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*) and (2) Sweet Pepper Bush (*Clethra alnifolia*).

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "C. Oly", is located below the main text block.