

## **Annual Report for 2004 Carlisle Trails Committee**

The highlight of the year was undoubtedly building two major boardwalks on the River Trail in Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. Sixty six volunteers came out on two glorious October weekends to build a 200-foot span near Foss Farm and a 130-foot bridge over the notorious “No Crossing” spot midway along the trail. The latter project had been the Trails Committee’s number one priority for many years. It was finally made possible by funding, logistical support, and encouragement from our partners in the US Fish and Wildlife Service, by the army of enthusiastic volunteers who came out to help, and by Gary Davis and the DPW crew who saved us at the last minute by moving materials to the remote site of the stream crossing. This was truly a community effort.

The Trails Committee in 2004 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 to familiarize townspeople with the trail network. Our 3<sup>rd</sup> annual full-moon night walk attracted 30 adventurous souls to the Cranberry Bog in March on a crystal-clear but very cold night. Those with remaining body heat were treated to views through Marc Lamere’s telescope. We again cosponsored a vernal pool walk with the Conservation Commission in April at the Towle Land. Wetlands biologist Chris Kavalauskas amazed the 40 children and adults with the rich life of this small pond. In October we led a tree identification walk at the State Park as part of the Gleason Library’s Carlisle Forests program. A large group of 75 participated, mostly high school students working on a leaf project. The annual after-Thanksgiving walk attracted 31 people to trek the now-passable River Trail and admire the new boardwalks.

Committee members walked all of the trails in town this year to check the accuracy of the Trails in Carlisle map book. All of the maps were updated, for inclusion in the 2005 Open Space and Recreation Plan and the Bicentennial edition of Trails in Carlisle.

As a public service, committee member and chain saw master Bob Eaton presented a chain saw maintenance clinic at Old Home Day that was well received.

Trail maintenance – The committee continued its emphasis on improved trail signage this year. Additional wooden signs were carved by volunteer craftsman Hal Shneider and painted and installed by members of the Trails Committee. A trailhead sign kiosk was installed at the Conant Land at the Town Hall parking lot. It, and kiosks at Foss Farm and the Greenough Land, were given a coat of green paint.

Louise Hara wrote a funding proposal for the River Trail bridge to the state’s Recreational Trails Program in April. It was not funded for lack of money, but was recommended and forwarded to the private Fields Pond Foundation, which surprised the

committee with a \$4,000 grant at the end of December. This is exactly the amount required for a much-needed third boardwalk on the trail spanning a small stream.

Committee members and many other volunteers participated in trail clearings throughout the year. A major effort was made to clear brush from the stone wall along the Clark Farm trail. Trail clearings were undertaken at Carlisle Pines, the Hart Land, O'Rourke/Great Meadows, Davis Corridor, Bisbee Land, Sachs Greenway, and the Towle Land. Work crews typically went out from 9:00 to 11:30 on Saturday or Sunday mornings.

Preserving trails – Committee members walked trails in the Cross Street area with neighbors concerned about preserving access in a large parcel slated for development.

Creating new trails – A trail connection was cleared from the State Park to the new subdivision road in Great Brook Estates, in accordance with the subdivision plan.

Advising the Selectmen – The Committee obtained copies of Acton's feasibility study for its section of the Bruce Freeman Bike Trail, which is planned to pass through a corner of Carlisle. George Fardy continued to monitor monthly meetings of Friends groups from neighboring towns, but our committee prefers another group in town to take the lead on Carlisle's section of this bike trail.

The committee began discussions with the Selectmen and Finance Committee about obtaining Town funding for the first time to purchase materials for future boardwalks and signage. A preliminary 15-year plan was drawn up for boardwalks and bridges on existing trails on public land.

The Committee is always trying to find better ways to interest the public in our activities. Notices are placed in the *Mosquito* for public walks and work days. We have an e-mail system to notify volunteers of trail clearing and bridge building days, public walks, and monthly meetings. The e-mail contact is [verna\\_gilbert@earthlink.net](mailto:verna_gilbert@earthlink.net).

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 Bob Eaton, George Fardy, Verna Gilbert (secretary), Louise Hara, Marc Lamere (chair), Steve Tobin, and Bert Willard. Report submitted by Steve Tobin.