

Annual Report for 2013 Carlisle Trails Committee

The Trails Committee in 2013 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 this year. A January full moon night hike at Foss Farm drew 30 people on a clear, cold night. In April, 32 people toured the Elliott land in advance of a Town Meeting vote on the Elliott Preserve. Also in April, we co-sponsored a vernal pool walk with the Conservation Foundation and Conservation Commission at the Cranberry Bog. Dr. Bryan Windmiller talked about life in a vernal pool and caught a number of critters for the 25 participants to examine. On a nice June afternoon, as part of Riverfest, 35 people walked from Foss Farm to the new Elliott Preserve using the new Foss boardwalk. On Old Home Day in June, 23 walkers joined the 7-mile Double Sundae Sunday Saunter with stops at both of Carlisle’s ice cream stands, finding relief from the hot and humid weather. The annual post-Thanksgiving walk in Estabrook Woods was chilly but sunny, attracting a large group of 61 to enjoy the natural sights and historical sites.

The Trails Committee’s guide book to the Town’s conservation lands, “Trails in Carlisle”, continues to sell well 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, extensively updated this year by volunteer Lisa Ankers, links to the Town’s web site, and also includes information on the Carlisle Trekker Award and notices for upcoming walks and work days.

This was a record year for Trekker Awards, with 8 people earning the award for hiking all of Carlisle’s trails: Marc Lamere in February, Sally Duscha in July, Paul Bergeron (and his dog Casey) in November, and the Teabo family (Pauravi, Tim, Somil, Jake, and Caleb) in December. The total count of Trekkers is now 27.

Trail maintenance – There were no major natural disasters this year affecting trails, a nice break from the previous two. In addition to committee members clearing trails throughout the year as problems were reported, we invited volunteers to help in two public work days. In October, 7 people came out on a rainy day to clear encroaching brush on the River Trail. On a nicer day in November, 19 people helped clear trails in Great Meadows, Hart Farm, and the Otter Slide Trail.

Other maintenance projects included replacing a small bridge in the Towle Land, rebuilding a boardwalk damaged by a falling tree and replacing numerous rotted boardwalk boards in Great Meadows, and repairing a boardwalk on the Rockstrom Trail. We added a bench facing the Concord River to the longest boardwalk on the River Trail in Great Meadows. With help from volunteer Jic Davis, a donor recognition plaque was installed at the wildlife observation platform in the Benfield Conservation Land. New

beaver activity flooded the Otter Slide Trail in the State Park near the end of the year, a problem to be addressed in 2014.

Preserving trails and new trails – After a unanimous Town Meeting vote, the Elliott Concord River Preserve was purchased by the Sudbury Valley Trustees with a conservation restriction purchased by the Town. Volunteers from Carlisle, IBM, the AARF Agility Club, and SVT staff and volunteers spent 4 days in June and August building and improving trails in the property. In May, 23 volunteers helped the Trails Committee build a new boardwalk and trail connecting the Foss Farm parking lot to the South Field Loop. The 60-foot boardwalk was built extra wide and strong to permit equestrian use. The trail connection gives access from the Foss parking lot to CCF's Bose property (boat launch) next to the Rte 225 bridge and to Skelton Road, a short walk from the new Elliott Preserve. A new trail in the Greenough Land created a loop between the main parking lot and the Blueberry trail at its crossing of Maple Street. A new loop trail in the Town Forest connecting two dead-end trails was laid out but not cut pending a wildlife study by the Land Stewardship Committee. A trail license providing a critical connection from Carlisle to over 600 acres of Acton conservation lands was given to CCF by Andy and Rebecca Mullen. Late in the year, trails were created in Carlisle's Ben's Woods and Acton's Robbins Mill to connect the two towns.

Interfacing with other boards and committees – We worked with the Open Space and Recreation Committee on the OS&R plan, which was essentially completed this year. Committee member Louise Hara chaired the OS&R committee and former member Kevin Smith prepared the maps. We worked with the Pathways Committee on plans for future expansion of the pathway system. We worked with the Board of Health on the placement of tick warning signs at trail entrances. We worked with the Recreation Commission on plans to build a footbridge between Spalding Field and the Banta-Davis Land, supporting their successful CPA request at Town Meeting, flagging the bridge location, and reviewing engineering plans. We worked with the Conservation Commissions in Carlisle and Chelmsford to discourage use of a new bootleg trail in a sensitive wildlife area at the Cranberry Bog.

Finances – At year's end there was \$11,270 in the Trail Maps revolving fund and \$13,286 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 Alan Ankers, Henry Cox, Louise Hara (vice-chair), Marc Lamere (treasurer), Warren Spence, Steve Tobin (chair), and Bert Willard (secretary). Report submitted by Steve Tobin.