

Annual Report for 2014 Carlisle Trails Committee

The Trails Committee in 2014 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 the Cranberry Bog drew 20 people in icy conditions. In April, we co-sponsored a vernal pool walk with the Conservation Foundation and Conservation Commission at the Conant Land. Dr. Bryan Windmiller talked about life in a vernal pool and caught a number of critters for the 22 participants to examine. In June, as part of Riverfest, 15 people walked from Foss Farm to Greenough, discovering three little runaway pigs on the way. On Old Home Day in June, 43 walkers started the 7-mile Double Sundae Sunday Saunter with stops at both of Carlisle’s ice cream stands, with Bates family history described by Ann Marie Brako. On a lovely fall day in October, 17 people walked from Ben’s Woods to Camp Acton, using new trails in Acton and the new trail connection between the two towns. The annual post-Thanksgiving walk was also from Ben’s Woods to Acton, but a longer 5-mile loop to the Trail Through Time and its historical sites. 35 people walked through two inches of new snow on a chilly but nice day.

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. Work has started on the next edition, planned for 2015. Individual trail maps are available on the Trails Committee web site, carlisletrails.pbworks.com. The web site, maintained 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. Links to Helen Lyons’ wonderful series of “Happy Trails” articles in the Carlisle Mosquito were added this year. These have more detail about the properties than in the trail book.

The committee embarked on a project to add uniquely numbered intersection markers at all major trail junctions outside of Great Brook Farm, which has its own markers. The markers are intended to make it harder to get lost and easier for public safety personnel to locate lost hikers. Marker numbers will be included on the next edition of the trail maps. We are working with art students at the Carlisle Public School to add nature-themed art work to each marker, as a way to raise awareness of trails and conservation land in the students and their families, and to make the markers more interesting to hikers. This year the enthusiastic students illustrated 25 markers for the Town Forest and Towle Land. Corresponding sign posts were installed by the Trails Committee; markers will be installed in the spring of 2015. Other conservation parcels are to follow.

There were three new Carlisle Trekker Awards earned this year for hiking all of Carlisle’s trails: Jeanne Wentzell, Sarah Rolley, and Barbara Lewis. The total count of Trekkers is now 30.

Trail maintenance – Trees continue to fall down across trails, at what seems to be an increasing rate, and Trails Committee members removed them throughout the year on virtually all public lands. In addition, we invited volunteers to help in a public work day in September. 21 people came out to clear trails in three crews at Foss Farm, Great Meadows, Greenough, Sachs Greenway, Rockstrom, and Poole Swamp.

Other maintenance projects included replacing a small bridge in Greenough with the help of CCHS students, repairing boardwalks in Great Meadows and Rockstrom, mowing trails in Great Meadows and the Benfield Conservation Land, and putting up trail markers and signs in the Rangeway and Hanover Hill parcels.

Preserving trails and new trails – (1) Two short trails were added at the Elliott Preserve, a canoe landing and access to a newly-installed memorial bench overlooking the Concord River. Sudbury Valley Trustees had a ribbon-cutting ceremony in October to celebrate completion of the Elliott Preserve project. (2) After discovering that a section of the Davis Trail in the Davis Corridor had been going across private property for decades, the trail was rerouted onto public land in two stages. The upland portion of the trail was cut in June, and boardwalks were built on two weekends in November to provide a much-improved wetland crossing. 30 volunteers on the first work day, and 25 volunteers on the second, made short work of a 63-foot boardwalk and 10-foot bridge. (3) After a year-long wildlife study, the Conservation Commission approved the Coyote Rock Trail, a new loop trail in the Town Forest connecting two dead-end trails. Trail cutting is planned for 2015. (4) A new plan for senior housing at 81 Russell Street was approved by the town. It includes a new loop trail around the property and trail parking. (5) We are working with CCF and the Acton Land Stewards on the best location for a trail, passing through both towns, on the Valentine conservation restriction, that connects Acton Street to the planned Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. Construction of the BFRT section in Carlisle is scheduled to begin in 2015.

Interfacing with other boards and committees – We continued to work with the Recreation Commission on plans to build a footbridge between Spalding Field and the Banta-Davis Land, replacing an old boardwalk. Construction was completed near the end of the year, and a new section of trail was cut to connect to the bridge. We worked with the Planning Board on the trail location and parking area at the 81 Russell Street development.

Finances – At year's end there was \$12,494 in the Trail Maps revolving fund, \$11,821 in the CPA account, and \$921 in the Trails Grant account. The spending limit for the revolving fund was increased to \$10,000 by Town Meeting, the anticipated amount needed to reprint the trail book in 2015.

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.