

Annual Report for 2021 Carlisle Trails Committee

For the second year, the Covid-19 pandemic had a big impact on the Trails Committee in 2021. The committee worked to keep the trails in good shape without the benefit of large volunteer work parties. All but one of our public walks were cancelled. Carlisle Trails Day was again virtual, as were committee meetings. Despite the limitations, we completed a number of projects.

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 one public walk, the Double Sundae Sunday Saunter on Old Home Day weekend. 17 people 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 24 trail map books were sold and we talked to many people about trails. The third annual Carlisle Trails Day, cosponsored with the Carlisle Conservation Foundation (CCF), was extended to a week at the beginning of June. Families and individuals signed up for their own walks, rather than having leaders and larger groups. New this year was Trail Marker Bingo, created by David Freedman of CCF. The goal of having every trail in Carlisle walked by someone was met, but numbers were lower than last year, probably a result of poor weather the first weekend.

Volunteer webmaster Lisa Ankers maintains the Trails Committee's web site, carlisletrails.pbworks.com, which links to the Town website (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 guide book to the Town's conservation lands, "Trails in Carlisle", is available at the Town Hall and Ferns Country Store.

This year 7 people earned their Carlisle Trekker awards for hiking all of Carlisle's trails: Beth Clarke (#57), Ginny Lamere (#58), Peter Burn (#59), Sharron Kenney (#60), Jeff Johnson (#61), Mary Russell (#62), and Michael Picard (#63). Others completed their walks but were unable to complete the requirement for a trails service project because of pandemic limits on group gatherings.

The anticipated completion of the committee's multi-year project to add uniquely numbered intersection markers at all major trail junctions in town did not happen this year, again, due to pandemic restrictions at the Carlisle School. Art students were unable to complete the final 13 markers.

Trail maintenance and construction – The first construction project of the year was adding a 40-foot bridge and 72 feet of duckboards through wetlands to allow public access to the Russell Conservation Land. Work was done on April 24 by the Trails Committee and other volunteers. Signs were also added to the trail. The second project completed work under the Partner Grant from the Sudbury, Assabet and Concord Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Council for trail improvements on the Greenough Land, awarded last year. The committee received \$999 from the grant. This year part of the Wood Duck trail was rerouted away from a wet area at the edge of Greenough Pond. Boy Scout Joshua Sun built a 30-foot trail bridge and removed a collapsed chicken coop near the trail as his Eagle Scout service project with help from Troop 135 Scouts and parents and advice from the Trails Committee. The work was done on July 31 with logistical support by the Town DPW. The Trails Committee cut back invasive Japanese Knotweed in the new trail corridor three times in the summer and fall. This eradication effort is expected to continue at least two more years.

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 153 entries for the year, compared to 155 last year and 167 the year before.

Other maintenance projects included repairing multiple broken boards on bridges on the pathway along Cross Street in the Greystone subdivision in September. The committee expects to need to completely replace the decking on the four bridges next year. The DPW agreed to pay for materials. The committee worked with the Recreation Commission and the Boy Scouts to replace rotting boards on the Spalding-to-Banta bridge. A bench on the River Trail was repaired after it was damaged by a rogue ATV in January.

The committee mowed trails including Red Tail, Piggery, and Beaver Loop trails at Great Meadows, Bisbee, Davis Corridor, Elliott, Foss, Fox Hill, Malcolm, Otter Slide, Sachs Greenway, Spencer Brook, Towle, and Two Rod Road. In addition, former committee member Jonathan DeKock mowed trails at Foss. Most trails were mowed multiple times through the summer and fall. In late fall, Committee members raked leaves and pine needles off all the boardwalks and bridges to prevent rot.

Last year's flooding on the Otter Slide Trail was alleviated when beavers were removed in January (coordinated by Great Brook Farm State Park). Beaver flooding on the Sachs Greenway Trail lasted through the rainy summer but receded in the fall. Six new beaver dams in the Towle Land created two major new ponds that flooded a bridge on the Inner Loop and part of the Bingham Connector in the late summer. Late in the year a temporary bridge was installed on higher ground on the Inner Loop (Beaver Bypass). A flooded section of the Blueberry Trail at Greenough was rerouted to higher ground including creating an opening in a stone wall. Part of the Hart Farm trail was rerouted in September to avoid wet spots.

The trail around the South Field at Foss was lost in the spring when the farmer plowed it under and planted corn. The issue was reported to the Conservation Commission who forwarded the complaint to the farmer, multiple times, but the trail was not repaired.

Eight trailside wooden benches were installed this year, at the Towle Land (William Shaw memorial bench), Conant Land (Castle Rock), Sachs Greenway at Two Rod, the Catbriar Trail in the Davis Corridor, a second bench in Towle field, Woodhaven Trail, Malcolm Outer Loop, and the Hilltop Trail in the new Woodward land. The committee had workdays in July and August to create 15 more bench kits, 4 of which have been used.

24 feet of duckboards were added in Towle field at the ends of the existing boardwalk. Duckboards are narrow wooden walkways placed on the ground to get through muddy spots on the trails. They are used in places where the water level does not require our usual raised boardwalks. They are less expensive and quicker to install than boardwalks. Two existing duckboards at Benfield were repurposed to the Cedar Loop and Hidden Pond when the formerly wet access road to the back field was filled with gravel for the Benfield septic work.

Additional trail signs were added on Benfield Conservation Land, Towle, and Holmes-Avery. The committee put up temporary trail closure signs while the Greenough dam was being rebuilt and while a new septic field was being installed at Benfield. “No Bikes” signs were installed at the ends of the Cutter’s Ridge trail easement at the request of the landowner when it was found by the Conservation Restriction Advisory Committee that the easement did not allow bikes.

The owner of Woodhaven Farm reported problems with off-leash dogs on his property in violation of the posted rules for the Conservation Restriction (CR) trail easement. The Carlisle Conservation Foundation (CCF) and Sudbury Valley Trustees, co-holders of the CR, are working with the owner to install a new fence and additional signage to address the problem.

Preserving trails and new trails – (1) A new trail easement through the Valentine property was signed. It gives better access to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail in Acton from Acton Street than was provided in an earlier Conservation Restriction. The trail is mostly in Acton and requires two wetland crossings. CCF has started the wetland permitting process through the Acton Conservation Commission. (2) The Woodward Village conservation land was deeded to the town. The part of the trail through the subdivision construction zone was temporarily closed. A new Hilltop Trail in the back of the property was cut and marked in July. (3) Bob Goldsmith proposed a new loop trail around the perimeter of Banta Davis. The committee presented the idea to the Recreation Commission and they received it favorably. We asked that they site a proposed Dog Park to be compatible with a loop trail. (4) Two existing bootleg trails at the Cranberry Bog were accepted by Chelmsford and Carlisle as official trails. We named them Shoreline Trail East and Shoreline Trail West. (5) Steve Hinton of CCF negotiated a revocable trail license for the part of the Conant-to-Morse Rd trail that currently passes through the

Ansara-Arnold property. There is also a backup permanent trail easement that would require relocating the trail. (6) Steve Hinton of CCF obtained a trail easement across the Spencer Taylor property along the gas pipeline on the Acton border. One day this might be part of a trail from Ben's Woods to Acton Street along the Acton border.

Interfacing with other boards and committees –Marc Lamere is the committee's representative on the Conservation Restriction Advisory Committee. Steve Tobin worked with the Conservation Commission on the wetland permit for the Greenough trail bridge and with the Historical Society to be sure there was nothing of historical interest in the collapsed chicken coop that was removed. Steve also worked with the US Fish and Wildlife Service on improved signage at Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. The committee worked with Jack Huntress, organizer of the MTB50 mountain bike ride, to be sure the route was passable and legal for bike use and to get a Cons Com permit. The October ride was successful with 60 riders and no public complaints.

Finances –At year's end there were \$12,231 in the Trail Maps revolving fund, \$11,521 in the CPA account, \$1,053 in the Trails Grant account, and \$13,303 in the Gifts account. \$1,412 was donated to the Gifts account by a Carlisle mountain bike group after their Carlisle riding tour. An individual donated \$10,000 to the Gifts account, by far the largest gift we have received.

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. We also thank Lisa Ankers for maintaining the committee's web site.

Current members of the Trails Committee are Alan Ankers (chair), Chris Chiapella, Roy Herold, Charlene Hinton, Marc Lamere (treasurer), Warren Spence (clerk), and Steve Tobin (secretary and vice-chair). Christian Hedlund and Helen Young are Associate Members. Alan Blevins retired from the committee when he moved to another town.

Report submitted by Steve Tobin.