

Annual Report for 2020 Carlisle Trails Committee

Like all aspects of life, the Covid-19 pandemic had a big impact on the Trails Committee in 2020 starting in March. Trail use skyrocketed. A record number of people completed the Carlisle Trekker Award. The committee worked to keep the trails in good shape without the benefit of large volunteer work parties. Our public walks were cancelled. Carlisle Trails Day went virtual, as did committee meetings. Despite the limitations, we completed a major boardwalk replacement (Tobin Bridge) and many smaller 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 before Covid appeared. A January 11 full moon hike at Foss Farm attracted 28 walkers on a warm 60 degree moonlit night. They were cheered by a fire, smores, and hot cocoa and cider. The second annual Carlisle Trails Day was extended to the full month of June to avoid crowds on a single day. Families and individuals signed up for their own walks, rather than having leaders and larger groups. The goal of having every trail in Carlisle walked by someone was met several times over. A few individuals walked every trail sometime during the month.

Volunteer webmaster Lisa Ankers maintains the Trails Committee's page on the Town website (carlislema.gov/189/Trails-Committee). The old web site, carlisletrails.pbworks.com, is also being maintained. 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 a record 13 people earned their Carlisle Trekker awards for hiking all of Carlisle's trails: Lisa Ankers (#44), Matthew DeKock (#45), Otto Judicke (#46), Nancy Kuziemski (#47), Scott Simpson (#48), Aileen Schwan (#49), Jake Schwan (#50), Alex Parra (#51), Sarah Hart (#52), David Hart (#53), Manuel Crespo (#54), Martina Rozumberkova (#55), and Nancy Hartle (#56). Many others completed their walks but were unable to complete the requirement for a trails service project because of pandemic limits on group gatherings. The committee purchased 100 Trekker patches for \$149 to keep up with demand.

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 due to pandemic restrictions at the Carlisle School. Art students were unable to complete the final 13 markers. A poster showing all of the marker art completed to date

was created by graphic artist David Freedman for an art exhibit at the Gleason Library celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Carlisle Conservation Foundation (CCF). While the pandemic postponed the art exhibit, a framed copy of the poster was given to art teacher Rachel Levy and will hang in the entrance hall of the school.

Trail maintenance and construction – The major construction project of the year was removing and replacing the 22-year-old and 162-foot-long “Tobin Bridge” at Great Meadows, the first boardwalk built by the Trails Committee. Working in small groups over several days in September, the project took 146 person-hours of volunteer labor and \$5,309 of materials, supplied by the US Fish & Wildlife Service. Another aging 40-foot bridge was replaced by Boy Scout Aidan O’Connor as his Eagle Scout service project with help from Troop 135 Scouts and parents and advice from the Trails Committee. Completed on June 6, the bridge is located on the trail from Bellows Hill Road to the Rockstrom Trail. The \$748 materials bill was paid for by the Trails Committee from CPA funds.

The Trails Committee received a Partner Grant from the Sudbury, Assabet and Concord Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Council for trail improvements on the Greenough Land including replacing a bridge and boardwalk and installing two trailside benches overlooking Greenough Pond. These funds were provided by the National Park Service under CFDA: 15.921 – Sudbury, Assabet and Concord Wild and Scenic River Assistance. Work under the grant was completed in October in time to view particularly colorful fall foliage from the Pond benches. The grant will reimburse the Trails Committee for \$999 in material costs.

Major wind events in August and October brought down trees across trails all over town. The committee cleared these and others throughout the year. The Google Docs spreadsheet the committee uses to keep track of fallen trees had 155 entries for the year, compared to 167 last year and 143 the year before.

Other maintenance projects included repairing boardwalks on the River, Red Tail, Mist, Beaver Loop, Catbriar and Hanover trails and at Foss, Towle, and the Town Forest properties. Our first repair under Covid restrictions was a boardwalk at Woodhaven Farm crushed by a falling tree in April. We worked sequentially, one person at a time, to remove the tree, remove the damaged section, and rebuild it. A new 10-foot boardwalk was also added at Spencer Brook Reservation.

The committee’s failing 20-year-old DR Trimmer Mower was retired and replaced with a new model for \$800. Trails that were mowed with this and other equipment included Red Tail, Piggery, and Beaver Loop trails at Great Meadows, Woodhaven Farm, Malcolm, Sachs Greenway, Foss, Spencer Brook, Otter Slide, Fox Hill, Two Rod Road, and Towle. Most were mowed multiple times. In late fall, Committee members raked leaves and pine needles off all the boardwalks and bridges to prevent rot.

Two sinkholes on the Otter Slide Trail from prior beaver activity were filled with rocks in March. In November, a new beaver dam under Old Morse Road flooded the Otter Slide

Trail to a depth of about two feet. Mitigation efforts are being coordinated by the Park Manager at Great Brook Farm State Park. A stone wall crossing on a relocated trail at Bartlett Farm was improved so mountain bikers would stay on the trail.

Five trailside wooden benches were installed this year, at the Town Forest, Old Morse Road, the rebuilt Tobin Bridge, and two at Greenough. The Committee is evaluating locations for future benches and has marked several locations for community feedback.

The Committee developed a standard design for duckboards and made a prioritized list of future locations for them. 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. Lumber for duckboards was purchased for \$529. Duckboards were installed on the Benfield Conservation Land, Woodhaven Trail in the Davis Corridor, and the Bisbee Land. Online inventories were created of all the Town's boardwalks and duckboards to aid in maintenance. Maps of poison ivy locations on all town trails were created to scope out this increasing threat.

The Committee installed signs with Covid-19 rules for conservation land use at many trailheads. Additional trail signs were added on the Fox Hill Trail and Castle Rock Trail.

The Committee struggled with how to involve trail volunteers when large group workdays usually sponsored by the Trails Committee were prohibited by pandemic restrictions. A Committee member trained several small groups of 2-3 volunteers (Trekker candidates and high school community service students) in trail maintenance so they could work on their own during the pandemic. Trails on the Benfield Conservation Land were adopted by a neighbor after she was trained on trail maintenance.

Preserving trails and new trails – (1) Trail markers and signs were installed on the new trail at the Russell Conservation Land. A neighbor kept the trails through the large field mowed after monuments were installed to locate the boundaries. After receiving a wetlands permit, a wooden staircase was built to access the trail from Russell Street. A stream bridge and duckboards are planned for next year to complete the trail. (2) A trail easement through the Lion's Gate subdivision off West Street was delineated with stone monuments as part of completing the subdivision. The easement connects the road to CCF's Pannell Land along the Acton border, currently without trails but with potential for future connections.

Interfacing with other boards and committees – Marc Lamere is the committee's representative on the Conservation Restriction Advisory Committee. He is also representing the committee on the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OS&RP) committee. The Trails Committee provided OS&RP inputs on potential trail connections, a 7-year action plan, and a list of accessible trails. Jonathan DeKock resigned as the Trails Committee representative to the Deer Committee after the Select Board cancelled the 2020 town deer hunt. Committee members met with Linh Phu, the new manager of the US Fish & Wildlife Service Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge, at the O'Rourke

farm to discuss issues related to trails at the Refuge. One outcome was USFWS funding of the materials for rebuilding the Tobin Bridge, discussed earlier. The Committee is also working with USFWS on improved signage at the Refuge. Additionally, the Committee submitted a written response to the Draft Proposal to Expand Hunting Opportunities at the Refuge, focusing on potential impacts to trail users.

Finances –At year's end there were \$9,939 in the Trail Maps revolving fund, \$11,663 in the CPA account, \$54 in the Trails Grant account, and \$3,852 in the Gifts account. \$900 was donated to the Gifts account by a Carlisle mountain bike group after their Carlisle riding tour. Brendan Properties donated \$1062.50 to the Gifts account for trail bridges and boardwalks in the Garrison Place development.

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 (secretary and chair-elect), Alan Blevins, Roy Herold, Charlene Hinton, Marc Lamere (treasurer), Warren Spence (clerk), and Steve Tobin (chair). Chris Chiapella, Christian Hedlund, and Helen Young are new Associate Members. Two long-time members of the Committee, Louise Hara and Henry Cox, retired this year after many years of invaluable service. They both had a huge positive impact on the Town's trail system. Associate member Jonathan DeKock, who accomplished a great deal in a relatively short tenure with the Committee, also retired. They will all be missed.

Report submitted by Steve Tobin.