

## **Annual Report for 2019 Carlisle Trails Committee**

The major event for the Trails Committee in 2019 was Carlisle Trails Day in May. Over 270 Carlisle residents walked the trails on one glorious spring day, collectively covering every mile of trail in Carlisle. 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 five public walks this year. A January 19 full moon hike at Foss Farm attracted 16 walkers on a cloudy night at the start of a major snowstorm. They were cheered by a warming fire, smores, and hot cocoa and cider. On April 27, 15 people joined wetlands biologist Bryan Windmiller exploring a vernal pool at the Conant Land in celebration of Earth Day. On May 18 the first Carlisle Trails Day was a smashing success. Conceived by Wayne Davis of the Carlisle Conservation Foundation and cosponsored by CCF and the Trails Committee, the goal of having every trail in Carlisle walked in one day was met. Over 270 people participated in led walks or went out on their own, covering 25 predefined routes. Perfect spring weather contributed to the strong turnout, in addition to free ice cream at Kimball's for younger walkers. As a side benefit, walkers reported trail issues so the entire 60-mile trail system was surveyed in one day. The weather was good for our annual Double Sundae Sunday Saunter on Old Home Day on June 23; 27 people did all or part of the 7 mile loop to both ice cream stands. The committee's booth at Old Home Day was well attended and 20 copies of the Trails in Carlisle book were sold. The annual post-Thanksgiving walk on Nov. 29 featured the relocated trail at Bartlett Farm and a ramble in Estabrook Woods. 26 people enjoyed walking off their stuffing.

The Trails Committee sponsored a chain saw safety workshop on Nov. 2 at the Town Hall parking lot. Arborist and former Trails Committee member Bob Eaton led a wide-ranging talk and demonstration for 27 interested townsfolk.

Volunteer webmaster Lisa Ankers spearheaded getting the Trails Committee's page on the Town website up and running ([carlislema.gov/189/Trails-Committee](http://carlislema.gov/189/Trails-Committee)). The old web site, [carlisletrails.pbworks.com](http://carlisletrails.pbworks.com), will be maintained for a while as we look at differences in functionality. Individual trail maps are available on the websites, as well as information on the Carlisle Trekker Award and notices for upcoming walks and work days. Lisa also added a downloadable Carlisle Trekker log spreadsheet to the web site. Volunteer Kim Schive (Trekker #17) maintains a Facebook page, "Carlisle Trails", to reach out to a different audience with trail information. 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 three people earned their Carlisle Trekker awards for hiking all of Carlisle's trails: Steve Hamilton (#41), Nancy Jaysane (#42), and Leslie Kmiec (#43).

The committee made good progress on its multi-year project to add uniquely numbered intersection markers at all major trail junctions in town (outside of Great Brook Farm, which has its own markers). These locations are shown in the trail book maps. We partner with middle school 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. 24 markers were completed and installed this year, bringing the total to 128. 13 markers remain to be painted by the students with completion expected in fall 2020.

Trail maintenance and construction – A nor'easter in October brought down trees all over town, particularly very large oaks. 42 trees across trails were removed by the committee that month. Trees came down throughout the year at what seems to be an increasing rate in many wind events. The Google Docs spreadsheet the committee uses to keep track of fallen trees blocking trails had 167 entries for the year, compared to 143 last year. Arborist Andrew Joslin helped with trees that were beyond the Trails Committee's capabilities in the Towle Land, Town Forest, and Bartlett Farm.

We invited volunteers to help in a public work day in May (12 people). Activities included clearing fallen trees, repairing boardwalks, installing a recycled bridge, and brush clearing.

Other maintenance projects included repairing 12 boardwalks in the Davis Corridor, Great Meadows, Towle, Rockstrom, Benfield Conservation, and the Twin Peaks Trail, replacing a bridge on the Holmes-Avery Trail, and installing a recycled bridge on the Cedar Loop in the Benfield Conservation Land. A backed-up culvert on the Wood Duck Trail at Greenough was cleared. The Committee mowed trails in the Town Forest, Foss Farm, Greenough, and Fox Hill multiple times with a member's tractor, mowed trails in Great Meadows, the Elliott Preserve, and Woodhaven Farm with a DR Trimmer, and used a string trimmer to clear the Otter Slide Trail and trails in the Sachs Greenway and Greenough Land. An overgrown trail into the Greenough Land from Maple Street was reopened by cutting back brush, removing fallen logs, and mowing to knock back the poison ivy. In the fall, Committee members raked leaves off all the boardwalks and bridges to prevent rot.

Volunteers Ted and Adam Selig proposed and built a test bed to evaluate different methods of dealing with slick boardwalks. Over time, boardwalks in shady areas develop a biofilm that is extremely slippery when wet. Located on a boardwalk near West Street on the Twin Peaks trail, the test bed includes roofing shingles, chicken wire, wire mesh hardware cloth, mesh for plaster walls, and a cement coating in different sections attached to the boardwalk. The test bed will be monitored for at least two years to see which treatment is most effective and durable. The test was approved by ConsCom and a report of the results will be supplied to them.

In September we built a 40-foot extension of the boardwalk on the Rodgers Road Connector trail after a wet area developed in the spring. Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, their families, and other community members joined the Trails Committee to build the boardwalk. The committee also worked with Boy Scout Aidan O'Connor to plan the replacement of an old boardwalk off Bellows Hill Road for his Eagle Scout project. The construction should happen in spring 2020.

Jonathan DeKock developed a comprehensive plan for trail improvements in the Greenough Land. He applied for and was awarded a \$1500 grant from the SUASCO River Stewardship Council to cover the cost. ConsCom and the Land Stewardship Committee were co-applicants. The work will be done in 2020.

In three work days, the Committee constructed 12 trailside wooden benches. Three of them were installed, at Towle Field, the Cranberry Bog, and the Rockstrom Trail in Bartlett Farm. The remainder will be installed next year. The design by Bert Willard has proven popular with trail users.

Using donated and recycled materials, the Committee installed a total of 204 feet of duckboards this year. 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. Duckboards were installed on the Blood Farm Trail in the Davis Corridor, the Blueberry Trail in Greenough, the Outer Loop in Malcolm Meadows, the Rangeway Trail, Spencer Brook Reservation, Sachs Greenway, and Woodhaven Farm.

As part of an effort to provide better trailside parking, the Committee examined locations on Rutland Street and North Road as possible parking areas for the Rangeway Trail, which currently has no public parking.

The Shneider family generously donated a table saw to the Trails Committee. This was the saw Hal Shneider used to make over 100 trail signs before he passed away.

Preserving trails and new trails – (1) A section of the Banta-Davis Trail was rerouted through the woods instead of through the grassy area next to the track. This was done so dog walkers could use the trail without entering an area off-limits to dogs. (2) The Trails Committee worked with the Planning Board and the developer of Woodward Village to finalize trail easements through the new development. (3) The Committee also worked with other stakeholders on proposed trail locations in the Town-owned Woodward land. (4) The Committee filed with the ConsCom for a wetlands permit for trail access to the Russell Conservation Land, transferred to the Town last year. The ConsCom was OK with the proposed boardwalk, but asked for alternatives to an earthen ramp from Russell Street that would be wetland fill. A wooden staircase will be proposed. (5) A new conservation restriction including public trail access at Bartlett Farm was approved. A section of existing trail near the Kibby Trail was relocated, including a small bridge, and opened in the fall.

Interfacing with other boards and committees – In a meeting with ConsCom, it was clarified that repairing existing, previously approved, boardwalks and installing narrow duckboards do not require new wetland filings. After a motion to ban deer hunting on Town land failed at Town Meeting, Steve Tobin retired from the Deer Committee as the Trails Committee's representative and Jonathan DeKock volunteered to take his place. Jonathan also became a member of the Planning Board. 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 committee and the Town Master Plan committee.

Finances – A Community Preservation Act request for \$15,000 to fund trail projects over multiple years was approved at Town Meeting. At year's end there were \$8,619 in the Trail Maps revolving fund, \$14,439 in the CPA account, \$583 in the Trails Grant account, and \$3,248 in the Gifts account. \$1,291 was donated to the Gift account by a Carlisle mountain bike group after their Carlisle riding tour.

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), Henry Cox, Louise Hara (clerk), Roy Herold, Marc Lamere (chair and treasurer), Warren Spence, and Steve Tobin (chair-elect). Jonathan DeKock is an Associate Member.

Report submitted by Steve Tobin.