

November 2013: Year in review, looking forward to next year.

The Trail Committee along with our newly formed *Friends of Sturbridge trails* (FrOST), in partnership with the Conservation Commission for 2013 has been a very busy and successful year in moving forward the Trails Master plan. Here are some updates:

Grand Trunk Trail: The TEA grant continues to move slowly along, with MassDot still trying to identify a good way to build that section trail. This past month a meeting was held between MassDot, the Town and the Corps of Engineers that resulted in identifying a design/build Company located in Virginia, which is approved by the Federal Highway Administration, to assist States in these types of grant projects. Efforts are currently ongoing to engage this company and determine if this is the way to go. Locally, the Town Planner is working with the trail committee and putting the finishing touches on a brochure/plan of the trail. It is hoped this will be completed, printed and available in the next few months.

Riverlands: The Board of Selectmen has informed the trail committee in September that the final mitigation plan for a portion of this property should be approved over the next month. The Trail Comm will be looking to obtain the necessary approvals from the Bd. of Selectmen and Conservation Comm to start work on this section of the Grand Trunk trail and related side trails on this property next spring. The trail committee is currently submitting plans to the Building inspector for the side shed roof for the storage building, to be built this winter.

Heins Farm: The trail emergency locator sign plan installation was completed, maps printed and distributed to the Fire and Police Departments. These maps, showing the trails and the emergency trail locator markers will greatly assist these departments in emergency response, as well as help the trail comm identify future maintenance need locations. Final ADA grade adjustments using the fine hard packed gravel were made to ½ of the pond loop trail, the Stafford Turnpike bog bridge received a slip resistant coating, and the Pond Loop trail bridge was re-sealed.

Leadmine Mt: The Shattuck Rd trailhead entrance parking lot was clearing and grubbing, along with the construction of a new trail head kiosk. A special Thank you to the Jr Carpentry class at Tantasqua for their building skills! Boys Scouts built another 700' section of the gateway trail. Trail tread improvements, to the design standards of the trail master plan, were completed on 1000' of the West Ridge, 1000' of the Red and 300' of the Blue trails, and a seasonal stream crossing was completed on the West Ridge trail. The entire length of the Old Growth Trail (600') has been completed with a fine gravel hard pack surface, making this the town's 2nd ADA compliant trail and the first on this property and two 1000 ft sections of the Arbutus Park trail also received the final hard pack fine gravel surface. A major section of the Camp Robison Crusoe trail was marked and opened, although the trail surface is in very rough shape. The Trail Committee has submitted plans and requested approval to the Conservation Comm for installation of a new bridge and seasonal stream culvert crossing for the Red Trail, trail surface improvements for a short section of the Blue trail, and replacement of a temporary bridge wetland crossing on the West Ridge trail with a permanent bridge. Planning and design

work were also stated for a 600' section of the Arbutus Park trail, bringing a section of the trail out of the field, along the OSV property line into the wood line.

FrOST Formed: In February, a group of residents got together, warmly treated by the Public House, and organized the *Friends of Sturbridge Trails (FrOST)*. Now with a membership of over 30, the friends group continues to grow and true to its purpose, is helping the Trail Comm maximize its volunteer effort and is promoting events on our open space lands. Their most recent event was a “new Moon” night hike which was held on a Saturday Night, and attracted some 24 folks to go out and explore the Heins Farm at night, with a presentation on the evening sky by Gary Staab.