



REPORT OF THE TRAILS COMMITTEE

2009

- 2009 has seen many changes and projects for the Trails Committee. These include reorganization of the committee, administration of grants, trail building, and volunteer days.

- **Organization**

- The Trails Committee, formerly known as the “Regional Trails Committee”, scope of responsibility changed by vote of the Board of Selectman (BOS) on July 20, 2009. The committee petitioned the BOS to expand the mission from solely working on the Grand Trunk Trail and representing the town on the inter-town “Regional Trails Committee” to a more encompassing role. The new role allows the Committee to develop trails on all open space parcels within the town (with concurrence of town bodies exercising custody, care and control). In addition, the BOS agreed to increase the size of the committee from three to five voting members and up to an additional five nonvoting associate members.

- **Committee members:**

- Randy Redetzke, Chairman Pat McGarrah
- Stephen Morris Brandon Goodwin
- Doug Quigley

- **Associate members:**

- Ed Calcutt Louie Berthiaume

- With the town acquisition of open space in the last few years, the job of managing and developing these parcels has become a much greater endeavor requiring a uniform application of policies on all town parcels. The current structure of the town committees has resulted in overlap in several areas of responsibility. This by no means is a failure of any committee or individual but solely the result of the growth in how the town manages open space. As the year comes to an end the Trails committee is working with the PLAC, Conservation Commission, Conservation Agent, and Town Administrator to better define the working relationship between the committees.

- **Recreational Trails Master Plan Steering Committee**

- The July 20, 2009 BOS meeting also voted to form the Recreational Trails Master Plan Steering Committee (RTMPSC). The RTMPSC operates as a subcommittee to the Trails Committee for the development of a master plan related to trails. The mission of the RTMPSC is to present to the BOS a comprehensive recreational trail master plan that addresses the towns major open space parcels, economic interests, water routes and inter-town linkage. The plan is also intended to include priorities and phasing.

- The RTMPSC is made up of nine members consisting of representation from several town committees and residents.

- Tom Chamberland - (Chairman) PLAC
- Randy Redetzke - Trails Committee
- Brandon Goodwin - Trails Committee
- Calvin Montigny – Business Community
- Mike Moran – Community Preservation Committee
- Jeff Bonja - Conservation Committee
- Steve Dalberth - Economic Development Committee
- Open – Resident
- Open – Resident

- **Regional Trails**

- The Trails Committee also represents Sturbridge at the inter-town Regional Trails Committee meetings. The Regional Trails Committee is a coalition of members representing Sturbridge, Southbridge, Brimfield, Holland, US Army Corps of Engineers and the Grand Trunk Trail Blazers. Seven meetings were held to coordinate trail efforts and share ideas this past year.

- **Volunteers**

- Volunteers continue to be the driving force on building trails within the town. The volunteer effort takes many forms, from organized events when local residents turn out with a rake, shovel or on the seat of a tractor, Trails Committee members donating time and equipment on weekends, to local contractors and their heavy equipment.

- During 2009 the Trails Committee hosted four major volunteer work events and participated in an additional event sponsored by the Conservation Commission Open Space Assistant.

- The volunteer efforts and donations for 2009 have resulted in a value of \$22,563.00 in labor, equipment and materials.

- The committee would like to thank all the volunteers that provide their time, equipment, and materials in 2009. Tom Chamberland who represents the PLAC with trails efforts continues to be a driving force volunteering many hours of his time. Special recognition is due for a number of other individuals, businesses and organizations for their generous support.

- Northern Tree Service New England Land and Lumber
- Soper Construction Richard Paradise
- Denise Lachapelle Randy Redetzke
- Butch Jackson Bill Chamberland
- Ahern Equipment Tantasqua HS Carpentry Class
- Sturbridge Lions Club US Army Corps of Engineers
- Sturbridge Rotary Club Sturbridge Department of Public Works

- **Projects**

- The Trails Committee emphasizes universal accessibility and sustainable trail construction techniques to promote usage while minimizing long term maintenance. This often means the closing of existing cart path trails in favor of newly constructed trails that are more cohesive with the existing terrain and environment.

- Heins Farm

- The Heins Farm area is nearing completion. Volunteer donations and labor to date in support of the Heins trails work and associated parking area total \$47,013.00.

- Trail Head Parking, Lot Leadmine Road

- Volunteers installed new donated pipe gates, and a new parking lot sign. The original Kiosk was relocated to the Heins property and a number of barrier rocks were installed to control access of motorized vehicles. Volunteers removed trash and barb wire along Leadmine Rd and installed boundary marking signs.

- Pond Loop Trail

- This fall volunteers completed the Pond Loop Trail. This Trail is a universal access, federal ABA compliant trail, built suitable for wheel chair access. The trail surface is fine crushed gravel with gentle terrain changes and includes a bridge built of donated materials that were supplied by Northern Tree Service and is recycled from a sound barrier wall system. The trail makes a loop starting at the trail head parking lot located on Leadmine Rd and includes a view of the pond with a bench. Future enhancements include additional root removal for a more uniform surface.

- Cabin Loop Trail

- The cabin loop trail is a universal access loop trail with a native material surface. This trail is reached off of the Stafford Loop Trail. Volunteers removed debris and improved the trail surface this past year.

- Stafford Turnpike Trail

- The Stafford Turnpike Trail originates across Leadmine Rd from the Trail Head Parking Lot on Leadmine Rd. This trail has had significant work done but is not fully complete. This year sections of the trail were rerouted to avoid wet areas along with other drainage improvements and reduced slope improvements. The trail includes an open meadow that is being managed for regeneration of wildlife habitat and a large hay meadow. The original stage coach route known as the Stafford Turnpike makes up a significant part of the trail. The Historical Commission, with assistance from the DPW has installed a plaque highlighting this historical feature. Remaining work includes final marking of the trail route, tree limb trimming and improvements to trail wet areas. When this trail is completed (anticipated to be spring of 2010), this trail and all other Heins Farm trails will be accurately mapped by volunteers utilizing Global Positioning System (GPS) equipment compatible with the town GIS system. This will then allow the generation of accurate trail maps.

- Leadmine Mountain Wildlife Management Area

- Arbutus Park Trail

- Work is currently on going in the area formerly known as Camp Robinson Crusoe with the construction of the Arbutus Park Trail. The Arbutus Park Trail when complete, will be a federal ABA compliant trail and will include three bridge crossings of sections of Hamant

Brook, circling the ponds. Two bridges are currently installed and the third is planned for spring of 2010. As part of the installation of the new bridge crossing of Hamant Brook near the South pond, the original non functional culverts currently located in the middle of the Brook will be removed. In the event that the removal of the existing dams goes forward, no impact to the final route of this trail is anticipated. The Trails Committee is currently purchasing and stock piling gravel for the final trail surface as part of a \$5000.00 grant received from the American Hiking Association in cooperation with the Grand Trunk Trailblazers. Over this year volunteers removed trees and brush, improved slope between the existing bridges, removed trash, and began preparation of the surface to receive gravel.

- Old Growth Trail

- The Old Growth Trail is a new section of trail cut in this year by volunteers. This is a short trail with a small loop that provides a view of the North pond. The trail highlights what best exemplifies what an old growth forest looks like, with large white pine trees and open forest floor with sections of ferns. Additional improvements are planned including repair of the bridge deck, trail tread surface, grade improvements, a new sign and view enhancements.

- Grand Trunk Trail

- The Grand Trunk Trail is part of the 66 mile Titanic Rail Trail that we are fortunate to have 6 miles of running through Sturbridge. The original rail bed roughly parallels the Quinebaug River and is a unique piece of history for this area dating back to early 1900. The promoters of the trail envision a non motorized trail running from Franklin MA in the East to Palmer MA in the West.

- Grand Trunk Trail Westville Section

- Over the past year the Trails Committee has been working to make improvements to the section of Grand Trunk Trail Westville Section. The area of work originates at the US Army Corps of Engineers Westville Recreation Area parking lot and continues West to the Ed Calcutt Bridge, a distance of 1.5 miles. The work is part of a \$97,000.00 project that includes a grant of \$35,600.00 from Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. In addition to the grant, work is being accomplished by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the Town of Sturbridge, in the form of cash and work in kind. Opacum Land Trust has also endorsed support of the project. Initial engineering and permitting has been accomplished along with initial work on USACE section. The Trails Committee is appreciative of the assistance that the Sturbridge Department of Public Works is providing in this effort. Work will be on going in 2010.

- Grand Trunk Trail Ed Calcutt Bridge to River / Farquhar Rd

- This ¾ mile section of the Grand Trunk Trail is being constructed principally utilizing a Federal Highway Transportation Fund grant. The total project is valued at \$590,460.00, broken down as federal \$490,283.00, state \$85,977.00, and the Town of Sturbridge matching \$10,600.00. The state will manage the project under Mass DOT. We are currently awaiting the final state acceptance of CME & Associates design, engineering and permitting costs along with a final go ahead from the federal government.

- **Future Projects**

- In addition to the items noted previously and with the winding down of work on the Heins Farm trails, the Trails Committee has started the initial steps required for work in two new

areas. The work includes two replacement crossings on the West side of the Leadmine Mountain Wild Life Management Area and replacement of a washed out culvert on the Grand Trunk Trail River Lands section. The Trails Committee is in the process of constructing a storage shed to house the variety of materials and tools that are accumulated for ongoing work. The shed is being built by the Tantasqua High School Carpentry Class utilizing donations of cash and materials. The DPW has also provided site preparation work.

- Respectfully Submitted,
- Randy Redetzke
- Chairman