

2007 Annual Report of the Williamsburg Woodland Trails Committee

The Williamsburg Woodland Trails committee was established by the Selectmen to work with interested public and private property owners to enhance trail opportunities in town.

The goals of the committee have been to establish awareness of the trail system existing in Williamsburg on both public and private land. The Committee also seeks to strengthen the coalition of all trail users (including hikers, skiers, snowmobilers, ATV riders, bikers and equestrians) interested in maintaining and improving Williamsburg's trails with respect for the individual landowners' rights regarding trail use on their land.

During 2007 the Committee hosted 3 hikes attracting hikers from and involving local and neighboring towns. Our first New Years Day hike from Petticoat Hill to Unquomok Reservoir was cancelled due to inclement weather, but we look forward to making this hike an annual event. In February we held a full moon snowshoe hike to the Big View, where hikers enjoyed cocoa and marshmallows roasted over the campfire on a moonlit Unquomok Mt. For our fall hike we teamed up with the Ashfield Trails Committee for a lead interpretive hike introducing us to the newly established Chapel Brook to West Rd. Trail which was developed with a DCR Grant partnered with the Trustees of Reservations and the Franklin Land Trust.

Individual committee members developed a needs inventory by assessing maintenance requirements of town trails. It was agreed to compile and maintain a list of volunteers who will assist committee members in addressing specific projects on these trails.

Major emphasis was placed on the establishment of a trail leading from the town owned Hall Conservation Area to the O'Neil Hill Area, recently acquired by MA Audubon. Through the coordinated effort of private landowners, MA Audubon and the town we now have a trail that will be officially opened this summer.

The local 6th grade Girl Scout troop committed 15 hours for each girl in order to earn the Junior Bronze Award. They installed bog bridges in the Hall Conservation Area and cleared the newly formed trail linking the Hall Conservation Area to O'Neil Hill. MA Audubon will assist in marking the trail.

We submitted an application for a Student Conservation Association grant again this year to complete erosion control measures on the Hall Trail. Although the application was not accepted, a SCA training crew spent two days installing bog bridges in the Hall Area and clearing out the Briar Hill Area lookout.

The trails committee and the Selectmen continued efforts initiated last year and formed an agreement with Northampton administrators to provide hiking access to Henhawk Trail, which crosses Northampton watershed property. This agreement will be part of their recreation/management plan.

Copies of the Woodland Trails brochure listing publicly accessible trails in town are available at the Town Office and Meekins Library. These trails may cross public and private property, so users must respect the trails, the property and each other. The Woodland Trails Committee requests that all users follow these guidelines when using local trails. Please obey all trail use and property signs. Please respect all trail users. Hiking, skiing, biking, horseback riding, ATV riding, and snowmobiling are all important trail uses in Williamsburg. Please stay on the trails, be sensitive to natural and cultural resources, and remove trash if you find it and avoid environmentally sensitive areas.

Visit our website www.WilliamsburgWoodlandTrails.org where you'll find our activities and trail maps posted.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Merritt

Committee members : Paul Jahnige, chair, Gwen Blodgett, Kathaleen Emerson, John Hoogstraten, Eileen Keegan, Susan Milsom