

Open Space Committee 2022 Annual Report

The Open Space Committee's mandate is to acquire, manage, and care for the town's protected conservation areas. The past year saw major accomplishments and a continuing effort to improve and maintain these important and popular Hubbardston resources.

Activities

A major achievement this year was the completion of a project spearheaded by committee member Mark Kresge to upgrade the kiosk and trail signage at the Mt. Jefferson and Malone Road Conservation Areas. Mark's successful MassTrails Grant proposal to the DCR, approved late last year, awarded the funds to create and install modern, descriptive kiosk and trail junction signs with detailed maps that he created to assist visitors in safely navigating and enjoying our conservation areas.

A complementary project involved a request to the committee from local Boy Scout Hunter Young to replace the existing deteriorated wooden trail signs at Mt. Jefferson Conservation Area with new wooden signs to complete the project requirements to attain his Eagle rank. Using US Forestry Service sign standards, Hunter produced and installed these new signs this past Fall. Another local Scout, Destiny Young, began work towards her Girl Scout Gold Award on a project to create a Fairy Garden on town land off Parson's Road near the town center to be completed by next year. Her Garden will become a local art destination with a fairy house, giant mushrooms, wind chimes, and native plantings. Our members assisted her in clearing a hiking trail to access her chosen site.

The Baystate Trail Riders again chose Hubbardston's conservation areas for their members' Fall trail ride.

Administration

Land conservation planning is an important function of the committee that supports Hubbardston's efforts to protect our valuable, local natural resources. Towards that end, this year the committee created a comprehensive prioritization process for evaluating existing open land that will provide the town with the detailed information that will assist our boards and committees in making decisions on available open land. A recent application of the process helped inform the Select Board's decision on exercising the town's right of first refusal involving Chapter 61 property on Ragged Hill Road that was being offered for sale.

The committee's work has begun on updating Hubbardston's Open Space and Recreation Plan that is due this Spring. This important document assists in developing the town's Master Plan that establishes goals for the next several years. It is also an important element to be considered for eligibility for many grant programs and independent project funding.

Maintenance

One of the primary functions of the committee is management of the town's conservation areas and open spaces. During 2022, this effort included repair and replacement of the Link Trail bed which had deteriorated from flooding and erosion. Work also continued with the invasive species control program at Malone Road Conservation Area, treating the overgrowth of bittersweet, speckled elder, poplar, and birch. The committee also worked to remove last winter's extensive trail-blocking tree falls and widen trails from encroaching saplings.

We look forward to seeing you all hiking our woods and fields, cross-country skiing on groomed trails at Malone, riding your bikes and horses, and enjoying picnics at the Mt. Jefferson trailhead. We welcome you to attend our monthly meeting to provide your input on improving our valuable recreation resources.

The Hubbardston Open Space Committee

Bob Hatch, Chair
Stephanie Frend
Mark Kresge

Todd Livdahl
Susan Worth
Rick Jones

Dave Marsh
Tim Hawley