



The Open Space Committee's mandate is to acquire, manage, and care for the town's protected conservation areas. We have been heartened this past year of pandemic restrictions to see the increase in hikers, bikers, horseback riders and picnickers at the Mt. Jefferson and Malone Conservation areas exploring these valuable resources Hubbardston is fortunate to have.

Events

Early in spring the committee co-sponsored a hike with the North Quabbin Trail Association, which helped create the accessible trail at the Malone Road Conservation Area. Along with interested locals, representatives from the Mt. Grace Land Trust and Northfield Open Space Committee came for the hike to learn about the benefits of geotextiles which were used in the creation of this trail last year.

Hubbardston's Girl Scout Troop 11809, led by scout leaders Katie Young and Deb Kaijala and working with committee member Susan Worth, completed their Monarch butterfly "Way Station" project at the Malone Road Conservation Area. With certification from the national Monarch Watch organization, they awarded them a grant and supplied milkweed plugs to support the work.

The Baystate Trail Riders equestrian organization once again held their annual October trail ride on Mt. Jefferson and Malone Road Conservation Area trails. The ride, attended by dozens of riders, culminated with a masked and socially distanced picnic at the Mt. Jefferson trailhead.

Administration

A highlight of 2020 was the creation of a Conservation Restriction (CR) on the Malone Road Conservation Area protecting the property in perpetuity for the enjoyment of outdoor activities by town residents and visitors. Working with local resident Jassy Bratko of the North County Land Trust, our committee's Mark Kresge had created the necessary Baseline Document that required mapping the area and supervising its boundary marking. The Committee subsequently received approval from the Select Board, Conservation Committee, and Department of Conservation and Recreation.

The year began with the committee exploring an opportunity to conserve and protect the Fieldstone Farm on Lombard Road that had been in the Smith family for generations. Working with the East Quabbin Land Trust, which owns Henry's Grove adjacent to the farm, and the state's Department of Conservation and Recreation, an agreement was reached in November for the purchase of this property. Once the purchase is complete in February 2021 the next step in its conservation will be approval by the town for the use of already existing resources to create the Conservation Restriction.

Additionally, the committee oversees the hay-cutting contract for our conservation areas' fields. This contract generated \$5,593 to the Hubbardston Preservation Trust Account. Expenditures during the year were \$5,202.68 for materials used on the accessible trail, new kiosk signage at the conservation area trailheads, appraisal of the Fieldstone Farm property, and clearing the brush around the Gates Estate foundation at Mt. Jefferson.

Maintenance

One of the primary functions of the committee is management of the town's conservation areas and open spaces. In addition to clearing the trails of blowdowns, mowing brush on the Malone Road Conservation Area field, and eradicating invasive growth there, the committee finished work opening up the overlook vista at Dottie's Rock at the Malone Conservation Area where member Todd Livdahl built a bench for enjoying the view. We also began work in the fall on clearing the area around the Gates Estate at Mt. Jefferson trailhead of brush and debris. The kiosks at Mt. Jefferson and Malone Road were upgraded with new, more durable trail maps created by committee member Mark Kresge. The colorful maps provide both photographic and topographical views of the areas, highlighting the trail connections and mileage.

To help mitigate the illegal use of our conservation trails by ATVs and dirt bikes (which damage trail treads and cause increased erosion) motorized vehicle restriction signs supplied by the DCR were mounted at all trailheads and access ways to our trails. We hope these restrictions will be observed by all.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Jones