

## 2009 TOWN FOREST REPORT

The following are highlights from the town forest this year:

Trail maintenance was performed though out the year by hikers and mountain bikers as they frequently visited the forest. As a result the trails were in really excellent shape. The hiking trail up from the Tandy Brook parking area continues to have rockwork to improve the difficult footing. Several groups of mountain bikers ride weekly in the forest in the dry season. We estimate than from 1 to 2 dozen people ride in the forest weekly in good weather.

The road crew enlarged the small parking area at the Tandy Brook Road trailhead so that in warm seasons it will easily accommodate 3 cars, and can be plowed in winter. If you hike up the trail about 30 yards there is a fixed trail map and a supply of take away maps.

Burning by Roger Stone, Ed Woodbury and Ginny Prince reduced brush piles from the view maintenance work done last year. Plenty of brush that was buried under the snow was repiled and covered by Ginny later and the boy scouts plan to burn it this winter.

Kate and Doug Freeland, Doug Miller, Laird Klingler, Jim Fitch and Ginny Prince, performed the annual trash pick up along Tandy Brook on April 25.

In May Frank Parks generously donated a Turkey Package (an assortment of about 50 seedlings suitable for turkey habitat). Due to time and site constraints about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the seedlings were planted on the CREA land by the boy scouts under the direction of Leo Maslan and Linda Fuerst while Ginny planted the remainder in the forest along the loop road, where they are marked by small light green flags.

Last year Kate Freeland organized an application to the Tasker Covered Bridge fund to buy color-coded plastic trail markers to replace the fading paint trail blazes. The grant was approved and Ginny Prince finished marking the red trail with  $\frac{1}{2}$  dozen of the 300 red markers to spare. She hopes to finish the other trails during 2010. She's also working on placing more directional signs at trail intersections.

Mowing of the loop road and associated open areas is called for every 3 years in the management plan but Ginny has been doing it each August or September to control invasive honey suckle, Russian autumn olive and buckthorn, and because it makes the loop road more inviting. Attempts to control buckthorn continue, with hand pulling, some girdling and covering cut stumps with recycled plastic plant pots. Also release of apple, spruce and other desirable individual trees is being done as called for in the management plan, mostly in conjunction with trail maintenance work.

The management committee hosted a hayride Sept 19. Jim Fitch provided the comfortable hay wagon, and aided by Monty Monette, drove it with his draft horses Mac and Belle. Francoise Jean-Baptiste, Richard Thompson, Linda Churchill and Pat Pinkson-

Burke enjoyed the tour of the loop road, while Ginny Prince provided information about the town forest.

The boy scouts camped out at the Eagle's Ledge lean to and later completed the privy for the shelter as scheduled. This comfortable, picturesque lean-to is available for anyone to use, just be sure to keep the area clean and carry out what you carry in. During dry seasons, a 4-wheel drive vehicle can drive south on Root Hill Road to within 50 yards of the shelter. Please stop in!

Betty and Doug Miller, Robin Liston, Bill Lipfert, Jim Fitch and Ginny Prince attended the workday on November 7. These hard workers performed extensive work mostly by hand to clean and maintain the many water bars on Root Hill Road and the loop road. Jim and Ginny placed a pivoting log gate on the power line right of way at the south forest boundary, with the help of Ginny's tractor.

Repairs to the loop road and Root Hill Road completed year before last have held up well. Water bar maintenance has paid off by decreasing erosion on Root Hill. The gates installed at the lower end of the loop road and cables on the upper ends have been closed at the end of hunting season and opened when conditions dry up in early summer. This has been very helpful in minimizing damage from 4-wheel drive traffic, which was a big problem in past years. We hoped that the pivoting log gate added this year would round out our ability to control motor vehicle traffic but unfortunately contractors cutting brush on the right of way also cut the log despite discussions with Ginny Prince ahead of time. We would like to acquire more official metal gates to control these access points visibly and more securely.

Kate Freeland resigned from the management committee due to extreme time constraints and will be replaced by Ed Woodbury, who now lives near the forest and has been helping maintain the trails and bridges for years.

The town forest continues to be very popular for hunting. There were many deer hunter visits during bow, muzzleloader and rifle season and the deer population appears very active. The town forest is open to all licensed hunters in season.

The committee would like to encourage visits by nature viewers, hikers, skiers, snowshoers and cyclists. There are maps posted on all the trails a short distance in from their starting points, and there is a container of paper maps at the posted map on the trail from Tandy Brook Rd. In addition maps are available at the town office or by contacting Ginny Prince.

An exciting event has already been scheduled for June of 2010. The Cornish Library is holding a talk by Tom Wessels, author of "Reading the Forested Landscape." After the indoor talk Mr. Wessels will continue his discussion on a guided walk in the town forest. Watch for details in the spring.

From time to time there is interest in scout or other youth or community projects; the current To Do list follows. If interested in working on any of these items contact any of the committee members.

To Do List:

1. Continue to Improve and maintain erosion control structures on Root Hill Road, the loop road, and power line.
2. Burn the brush at the lookout to tidy up and revitalize existing blueberry patches
3. Inventory the flora and fauna of the town forest, ideally with photographs, and document tree growth over time.
5. Make and install more signs - directional signs for the trails, no motor vehicle signs where needed, possibly more detailed signs at the forest entrances explaining permitted activities, same as on the back of the trail maps.
6. Archeology study - find and map the foundations, stone walls, etc., find the privy and trash pits and excavate, research the history of residence and land use, etc.,
7. Create an interactive guide to the town forest for school age kids.
8. Release and prune apple trees (second go-round)
10. Design and at least begin a way to quantify and then monitor the growth of buckthorn, and other invasive plants.
11. Finish placing lace new trail markers.
12. Clean up scrap from processing wood for the recycling shed and other projects

As in past years, the town forest budget includes no tax money. Because state law requires that any funds, donation or payment or otherwise, must be authorized in the warrant, the forest management committee is requesting permission to spend up to \$1500 for trail marking materials and other miscellaneous items for repair and construction of signs, bridges, gates etc.

For more information or to share thoughts about the town forest contact any committee member:

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