

Northfield Open Space Committee

2009 Annual Report

During 2009 the Open Space Committee (OSC) continued to focus on tasks related to implementing the Northfield Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), approved by the town in November 2005. The committee met eleven times in 2009 and completed or made substantial progress on a number of the actions items specified in the OSRP.

The OSC has developed strong working relationships with the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust and the North Quabbin regional Landscape Partnership. These entities have assisted the OSC with various landscape maps and help the OSC stay abreast of conservation opportunities. For example, they have helped the OSC keep tabs on the status of Crag Mountain (which was for sale at one point), provided the OSC with model plans for drafting possible property management plans where appropriate, and assisted with communications with three property owners interested in preserving their land.

The OSC drafted a town procedure for responding to right-of-first-refusal opportunities from the sale of chapter 61 properties. The Selectboard circulated the draft and made appropriate changes; copies are available from the Selectboard.

The Franklin Land Trust requested the OSC's support for a town-held conservation restriction on several acres between the Connecticut River and route 63 south of the village. The land was in the "high priority" category resulting from the Trust for Public Land Conservation Visioning study completed in 2008; therefore the OSC supported the proposal and communicated that support to the Conservation Commission and the Selectboard.

As the five-year period for the OSRP expires in November of 2010, the OSC began work on an update or revision. If revised, the new version would extend to 2017, as the state has changed the active period of an OSRP from five to seven years. A minor update might be accepted by the state EEA department to extend the current version to 2012.

The OSRP, the associated committee work-plan, committee meeting minutes, other documents, committee membership, and meeting times, are on the OSC page of the town's website, www.northfield.ma.us.

The OSRP contains a large number of ongoing responsibilities, such as:

- Citizen Stewardship: The Citizen Stewardship Award, an annual award initiated in 2007, was awarded for the third time in 2009.
- Open Space Conservation: The OSC continues to track various opportunities to conserve open space in Northfield.
- Stream Monitoring: The OSC continues to partner with a local non-profit water-resource group, Greater Northfield Watershed Association (GNWA), on issues of mutual interests. GNWA has formed a number of "stream teams" comprising community individuals studying various properties of the tributaries of the Connecticut River in Northfield. GNWA occasionally publishes reports on this activity, which is essentially and ongoing activity specified in the OSRP.
- Trail Work: Work continued on providing information on and maintenance of various trails in the town. The refurbishing trails and facilities on King Philips Hill, begun in 2008, continued into 2009. Such work is also an ongoing activity specified in the OSRP.

Respectfully submitted by members of the Open Space Committee:

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