

# Northfield Open Space Committee

## 2010 Annual Report

During 2010 the Open Space Committee (OSC) met ten times and made substantial progress on a number of the actions items specified in the Northfield Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), approved by the town in November 2005. The OSRP is scheduled to expire in November 2012 and therefore efforts have begun to revise the OSRP and have the town vote for renewal at the May 2012 town meeting.

When approved in 2005 the period for an OSRP was five years. However, last year the state changed this to seven years for new OSRPs and allowed communities with existing OSRPs to apply for a two-year extension by providing updates to the *Action* section; the OSC put considerable effort into making such an application, and was granted the two-year extension.

A major activity of the committee during 2011 will be to prepare the revised version for consideration by the town at the May 2012 town meeting. This will involve conducting a new survey, holding public meetings, and revising sections of the current OSRP accordingly.

Consistent with the goals of the OSRP, in 2010 the OSC initiated activities to place trails along certain sections of the riverbank in Northfield owned by FirstLight Power, Inc (FLP). The sections currently envisioned include south of Bennett Meadows and north of King Philips Hill, both on the west side of the river, and between the boat ramp and the mouth of Mill Brook on the east side of the river. The OSC is working with FLP, which is supportive of this initiative. The OSC has applied for a DCR trail-building grant to experiment with a short trail extending south from the boat ramp; if granted that work can start in the summer of 2011.

The OSC continues its strong working relationships with the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust and the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership. During 2010 the OSC worked closely with these organizations to promote town acceptance of 151 acres of woodland southwest of Gulf Road. This property was purchased with Forest Legacy funds, will be permanently protected from development, and will be managed with a forest stewardship plan. The town accepted this land at the May 2010 town meeting; the stewardship plan will allow periodic conservation-protecting timber harvests, which could, over time, generate more revenue for the town than corresponding (CR or Chap 61) property taxes.

The OSRP specifies a number of ongoing responsibilities, including:

- Citizen Stewardship: The Citizen Stewardship Award, an annual award initiated in 2007, was awarded for the fourth time in 2010.
- Open Space Conservation: On the order of 200 acres of open space in Northfield, mostly forest, were permanently protected in 2010. The OSC continues to track and promote various opportunities to conserve open space in Northfield.
- Stream Monitoring: The OSC continues to partner with a local non-profit group, Greater Northfield Watershed Association (GNWA), on issues of mutual interests.
- Trail Work: The OSC continues to monitor trails and, as described above, has initiated the establishment of a set of trails along the riverbanks of the Connecticut River.

The full OSRP, OSC membership, meeting times, and meeting minutes, as well as other documents, are on the OSC page of the town's website, [www.northfield.ma.us](http://www.northfield.ma.us). The OSC has representatives on three other Northfield committees: Agricultural Commission, Community Preservation Committee, and the Planning Board.

Respectfully submitted by members of the Open Space Committee:

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