

Northfield Open Space Committee

2008 Annual Report

During 2008 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 ten times in 2008 and completed or made substantial progress on a number of the actions items specified in the OSRP.

Chief among OSRP accomplishments during 2008 are completion of a comprehensive set of conservation priorities for Northfield, based on both objective scientific data and subjective community input, and the town securing a major funding source for open space preservation.

With regard to conservation priorities, the OSC worked closely with the Trust for Public Land Conservation Visioning process in Northfield that began in late 2007 and was completed in May of 2008. The OSC initiated this study and was well-represented on the selectboard-appointed steering committee; however many other committees and community individuals played major roles as well, and the results reflect wide community involvement.

With regard to funding, the town adopted the Community Preservation Act (CPA) in November, 2008, which, among other things, provides funding for town-approved open space preservation projects. For example, CPA funds can, with town approval, be used to fund the town's share of Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) and Conservation Restriction (CR) adoptions. While the OSC played no formal part in placing the CPA on the November ballot, nor in promoting its passage, the OSC conducted a comprehensive investigation of the CPA in 2006 and strongly recommended at that time that the town adopt the CPA.

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.

A summary of other OSRP accomplishments in 2008 includes:

- Citizen Stewardship: The Citizen Stewardship Award, an annual award initiated in 2007, was awarded for the second time in 2008.
- Conservation Priorities & Funding: See above.
- Committee Partnerships: The OSC has continued to work closely with the Historical Commission and now has a representative on the Agricultural Commission.
- Stream Monitoring: The OSC partnered with a local non-profit water-resource group, Greater Northfield Watershed Association (GNWA), on issues of mutual interests; GNWA has received a grant to use "stream teams" of community individuals to study the tributaries of the Connecticut River. GNWA has published a preliminary report on this essentially ongoing activity specified in the OSRP.
- Trail Work: Work continued on providing information on and maintenance of various trails in the town. The trails on King Philip's Hill were refurbished and new signs placed at the trailhead. Such work is also ongoing activity specified in the OSRP.

Respectfully submitted by members of the Open Space Committee:

Ruth Gallagher, Eleanor Goodman, Joanne McGee, Sam Richardson, Susan Ross, Jennifer Tufts, Jerry Wagener