

# Northfield Open Space Committee

## 2013 Annual Report

The seven-year revision of the 2005 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) was submitted in December of 2012 and provisionally approved in March 2013 by the Department of Conservation Services Office of Energy and Environment Administration (EEA). After the Open Space Committee (OSC) complied with the half-dozen fairly minor EEA requests to complete the revision, the revised OSRP was given final approval by EEA in June 2013. This revision is dated 2013 and is good until March of 2020. Copies of the OSRP were made and distributed to various town committees and the town hall.

The new OSRP has two goals. ***Open Space Goal: Ensure that Northfield protects farmland, forest land, scenic views, and other open space vital to sustaining the town's historic rural character and maintaining the quality of air, water, and wildlife habitats.*** This goal has six main objectives for its realization. ***Recreation Goal: Ensure that Northfield maintains and improves the variety, quality, and accessibility of recreational facilities important in the twenty-first century for health and well being of all residents, and promote the use of these facilities and any organized programming thereof.*** This goal has four main objectives, two of which respond to the preponderance of public input; emphasis was placed on these two during the year, as described below.

During the year the Northfield Planning Board developed a draft revision the town's Master Plan. This was done using a master plan roundtable and planning consulting team. The OSC was represented on the roundtable and met with the consulting team. The newly-approved OSRP was very useful in updating the open space and natural resources section of the master plan. The final draft of that plan places high priority on both OSRP goals

One of the major objectives of the new OSRP, developed in collaboration with the Northfield Recreation Commission, is to examine prospects for a community park in Northfield, with community athletic and recreational facilities. The OSC began working with the Recreation Commission during the year to identify potential locations for such a facility; this work and collaboration is ongoing.

Another major objective of the new OSRP is to better document the town's hiking trails. During the year the OSC designed a trail icon based on the town flag to use where trails are not adequately marked. The OSC also designed a small kiosk to be placed at trailheads that do not otherwise have facilities for dispensing trail information. Toward the end of the year work was started on a website and brochures for the trails in town. These various activities will be continued into 2014.

In the spring NMH put several properties on the market, including the 150-acre golf course and adjoining Mill Brook wetlands. Subsequently an ad hoc group of town residents, calling themselves the "Friends of Mill Brook Conservation Area" (FMB) met to discuss preventing development of this area. Several members of the OSC attended those meetings because of the long-standing OSC interest in preserving the Mill Brook wetlands and trail for public use. Those meetings culminated in letters to the Selectboard, from both the FMB and the OSC recommending the town purchase 75 acres of wetlands (not including the golf course); the OSC letter outlined how the purchase could be made without use of funds from the town budget. [Subsequently NMH accepted an offer from a third party for all 150 acres; the OSC hopes to work with the new owner toward the goal of preserving the wetlands area and making it available for public use.]

During 2013 the OSC also supported the land stewardship plan adopted by PVRS and continued to co-sponsor the Northfield Trails Association series of third-Sunday-of-the-month hikes in Northfield.

See the town OSC page of the town website, [www.northfield.ma.us](http://www.northfield.ma.us), for the full OSRP, meeting information, and various documents. The OSC is represented on: Agricultural Commission, Community Preservation Committee, Conservation Commission, Historical Commission, and the Planning Board.

Respectfully submitted by members of the Open Space Committee:

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