

Fall 2004

From The President's Desk:

A New Master Plan for Bolton

Bolton's last master plan was written 33 years ago. On November 15, Bolton town meeting voters will decide whether to spend \$45,000 to create a new master plan.

The Bolton Conservation Trust is one of many groups supporting the creation of a new master plan. It could make a big difference in what kind of town Bolton will become.

The last master plan was done in 1971, when 495 was new, and had just put Bolton on the map. At the time the town had fewer houses and more farms and forests. There was no zoning, and little of the abundant open space was protected from development. The master plan recommended the adoption of zoning, including some business zones, and the protection of some open spaces.

Soon after the 1971 master plan was completed, the town passed a zoning bylaw, including residential and business zones. And over the years many open spaces have been protected by gifts, purchases and zoning, and today protected open space totals over 25% of Bolton's land area. Not everything in the old master plan happened, such as its proposal for a new loop road to bypass the historic town center.

Today's new master planning initiative is not motivated by a new highway; it's prompted by the challenges of being one of the fastest growing towns in the state. More growth is inevitable, as we lie in the path of a sprawling metropolis, and about half of Bolton is unprotected undeveloped land. A master plan can

guide growth, so it does not consume what is special about Bolton.

Recently, the Selectmen and Planning Board appointed a Master Planning Committee, which includes: Dick Heaton, Russ Karlstad, Margaret Campbell, Stephen Garner, Brad Reed, Mickie Simpson, Mark Sullivan and me (Ken Swanton). Chris Slade attends from the Advisory Committee. Most are current or former Planning Board members, some have been involved with the schools and other groups, and one provides the fresh perspective of a new resident. We meet every other Monday night in the town hall, and anyone can attend.

The master plan builds on recent long range planning efforts, including a town survey and studies of housing, open space, water and sewage. Help is coming from Bolton's new town planner, Nathaniel Tipton. The proposed \$45,000 is to fund a consultant to complete the master plan.

The 2001 town survey showed citizen's top three priorities were: protect the rural character and open space of Bolton, provide strong schools, and moderate the growth of taxes

The key to meeting these objectives is the population growth rate. If the town grows "only" another 50% in the next 25 years, then all three of the above goals can be achieved simultaneously. But, if population doubles then schools will be strained, much open space will be lost, and it will be hard to moderate the growth of taxes. Therefore, the cornerstone of the proposed master plan is to plan for a very big growth in population, but to avoid overwhelming growth.

The plan will consider many aspects: open space protection, school buildings, town buildings, fostering of working farms and other compatible businesses, affordable housing, zoning and projected town finances and tax rates.

The Open Space chapter is of particular interest to the Bolton Conservation Trust. It builds on the town's Open Space plan, which has just been updated by the Conservation Commission, and calls for the expansion of protected lands in fifteen "core conservation areas", comprising Bolton's largest and best forests and farms. A Master Plan can consider open space in a much broader context, such how the protection of

developable open space at a low enough cost per acre can moderate the growth of taxes by lessening pressures on schools and other services.

Please come to the town meeting on Nov 15th and vote to create a new Master Plan for Bolton. And then try to attend one of the public forums that will be held to gather input and discuss the plan.

Ken Swanton
President
Bolton Conservation Trust

Construction of the Zink Conservation Trail

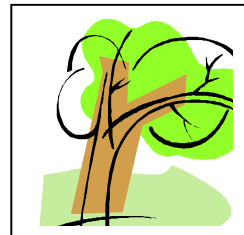
During the course of the summer months the Bolton Conservation Trust in conjunction with the Bolton Conservation Commission have finalized the legal easements for a new section of the Bolton Loop Trail known as the Zink Trail. This trail easement had been on paper for several years; however, the easement required major modifications to support the construction of a usable conservation trail.

Working with both Jonathan Bedard of Brookfield Farms Corp, and John McNulty a developer and abutter, the group was able to layout a new easement which will work for all parties.

This new trail will have a small parking area on Corn Road and the conservation trail will run along a stream and up to an old dam. The trail continues along stone walls and eventually will link to the Levison Property, and up to existing trails on the Colby property.

The Bolton Trail Committee will begin the construction of this trail during the month of November. This is a complex trail which will require the construction of three bridges, and over a half mile of new trail. Watch for the dates of trail work days in the Bolton Common.

Anyone interested in helping with this construction please send email to the Bolton Trail Committee at:
dangaffney@comcast.net



Conservation Trust Walks for November and January

On Sunday, 11/21, at 3:00 P.M., we will walk the north peak of Vaughn Hill and on our return at dusk, will stop and talk about the beavers near the trail head. Park in the drive at 207 Green Road (John and Rona Balco). Rona will talk about the beavers.

On Saturday, 1/1/05, we will meet with walkers from the Harvard and Stow Conservation Trusts at the parking lot by the dam at Delaney at 1:00 P.M. This is a great family outing to celebrate the New Year!

Learn To Track

Do you love the outdoors and have an interest in wildlife? Are you looking for a way to make a meaningful contribution to conservation? If so, this might be for you.

I am looking for people interested in forming a mammal tracking group in Bolton and nearby towns. We will be training at a mammal tracking school, Keeping Track, in Jericho, Vermont. While there are many tracking schools around the country, Keeping Track is unique in its focus of teaching trainees to gather data that can help prioritize land conservation efforts. People are taught to identify, interpret, and record the track and sign of certain target species. The important species (such as vulnerable, endangered, or "keystone" species) are determined for the area of interest, and then trainees are taught how to design and monitor study areas, called transects. The data generated can then be used to help prioritize land conservation efforts.

This information can be critically important because land conservation efforts that focus, for example, only on recreational value or aesthetic appeal, can ignore the needs of wildlife and do little to protect biodiversity. Documentation of land use by wildlife is necessary to delineate core habitats and the connections between them, or "travel corridors". Using this information to help prioritize land protection efforts can ensure that conservation of land amounts to conservation of diversity.

The training does not involve a huge time commitment. Three full days of tracking in Vermont are required for certification. In addition, three days of tracking in the trainees' own area, under the supervision of a Keeping Track staff member, are required. These six days, in total, are spread throughout the year. The cost of the training is about \$400, exclusive of travel expenses.

For more information on Keeping Track, please visit <http://www.keepingtrackinc.org/>. If you are interested in becoming part of this local group, please contact me at 978-779-6597 or

janetpesaturo@comcast.net. No previous experience in tracking is necessary.

Janet Pesaturo
133 Wilder Road
Bolton, MA

Directors Wanted!

The Bolton Conservation Trust has openings for Directors and Associate Directors. If you would like more information about these positions, join members of the Board on Sunday, November 14th, at 2:00 P.M. for an information session and light refreshments at the home of Bob and Alice Roemer, 185 Main Street. The Roemer's home was the Trust's first conservation effort and is now the site of the restoration of the Moses Wilder Blacksmith Shop. **Please call the Trust Office, at 978-779-2754, and leave a message if you would like to attend.**

2005 Membership Drive

Our 2005 Annual Membership Drive is set to start at the end of November. In 2004, with your support, the Trust was able to help permanently preserve two of the remaining five major apple orchards in Bolton, provide fun and environmental learning for over 150 children at The Tom Denney Nature Camp, support environmental education at the Florence Sawyer School with the ELF Program and sponsor a series of walks on trails throughout the town. **None of these efforts or programs would have been possible without your generous support. Thank you!** We encourage everyone to join the Trust and enjoy the wonderful conservation lands in our town.

The Bolton Conservation Trust

Established 1974

Dedicated to its mission, "to assist in and promote the preservation of the rural character of Bolton, to preserve and maintain conservation areas, and to educate the public concerning the use of natural resources."

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Bolton Conservation Trust, Inc.
P.O. Box 14
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