



Fall 2005 Newsletter

From The President's Desk:

Dear Members, Friends & Bolton Residents,

Land conservation in Bolton continues apace. I am pleased to announce that during the summer the Bolton Conservation Trust received the generous donation of a conservation restriction on 42 acres of land between Randall and West Berlin Roads. This land already has several trails on it and when added to existing conservation land in and around Randall Road, creates a block of approximately 150 acres of permanently protected land. Furthermore, this block of land connects to the Schartner/Nicewicz APR land which will consist of 180 acres of permanently protected farmland and will create a trail easement all the way down to the Fyfeshire land on Wattaquodock Hill Road

Speaking of the Schartner/Nicewicz APR, an update is in order. At this time all approvals and agreements are in place to complete this deal. We are only waiting for state funding which has been a bit slow in coming. We now expect the state funding to arrive early next year at which time the deal will be consummated. Our thanks go out to the to both families for their patience in waiting for this long process to reach its conclusion.

In this issue, you will find an update from the Bolton Trail Committee about the Bolton Loop Trail. I would like to congratulate them for the excellent work they have done on this so far and to wish them success as they continue in this endeavor. Their perseverance has created an asset that residents of this town can continue to enjoy for many years to come. The trail committee has recently setup a web site at www.hikebolton.com.

Like many towns in Massachusetts, Bolton has been overwhelmed with applications for Chapter 40B

developments in the last couple of years. Chapter 40B allows a developer to skirt town zoning bylaws and regulations if the developer agrees to make 25% of the units affordable. While the Conservation Trust lauds the effort by the state to create more affordable housing, it is our feeling that this law is being abused by developers because it allows them to increase the value of their land by increasing the density of housing on it. The town of Bolton is currently in the enviable position of being able to deny 40B applications because it has approved enough units over the last couple of years to qualify for a short-term exemption. We urge the Zoning Board of Appeals to use this exemption to deny the Riverside 40B application currently before it. Riverside 40B is a proposed 12 unit development on eight acres of land on Still River Road abutting Bolton Flats and the Still River. At over 1000 acres, Bolton Flats is the largest piece of protected land within the town of Bolton. Furthermore, the Riverside 40B parcel is entirely within an Area of Critical Environmental Concern as identified by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and a large portion of the property contains Priority Habitat for Rare Species as identified by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program of the Commonwealth. While it is true that the town cannot turn down all 40B's, clearly this one is worth using our exemption on.

As always, please feel free to contact me if you have questions about the Trust or have concerns that you would like to share with us.

Sincerely,

Tom Parker
President
Bolton Conservation Trust
fatherofsam@verizon.net
978-621-1144

Associate Directors Wanted

Do your share our enthusiasm for Bolton's Farms and Open Spaces? Interested in getting involved in helping to preserve the abundant natural beauty of our town? Interested in helping promote education about nature and the environment?

The Bolton Conservation Trust is currently searching for a few Associate Directors. To be an Associate

Director, you need only enthusiasm for promoting the Trust's mission and to be able to attend our monthly meetings on the second Tuesday of every month. In this role, you can also take additional responsibility, if desired, for education, public relations (newsletters, web site), land stewardship, fundraising, or events (walks, fundraisers, etc.).

If interested, please contact Tom Parker, President at fatherofsam@verizon.net.

Nashaway Trackers Get Going

You might find us measuring the distance between footprints of a bounding animal in the snow, sniffing the moisture on the side of a tree stump for that distinctive feline odor, or dissecting a scat to determine what was on a coyote's menu. Odd as it may seem, this is our idea of fun!

In existence since the fall of 2004, the Nashaway Trackers are a group of ten outdoorsy individuals from Bolton, Stow, and Harvard, learning to interpret and document tracks and sign of local mammals with the Keeping Track Monitoring Program. Our remaining five training workshops will occur monthly, from December through April of 2006. Upon completion of training, we begin reconnaissance, probably a year's worth of work during which we determine study areas and delineate transects. We then begin formal monitoring of mammal activity.

One potential project area under consideration is the region spanned by the Oxbow NWR, Bolton Flats, and the unprotected land which separates the two. We suspect that monitoring data will demonstrate that this "in-between" land is an important travel corridor for animals moving between Oxbow and Flats. If so, such data may be helpful in securing funds needed to purchase and protect this land.

Public education is another important activity of Nashaway Trackers. On December 28, several of our members will lead a tracking walk for the West Boylston Cub Scouts. On January 29, we lead a walk for families sponsored by the Harvard Conservation Trust.

If you are interested in joining our group or would like to learn more about us, please contact me at janetpesaturo@comcast.net or 978-779-6597

Bolton Loop Trail Receives State Grant



In 2001 the Bolton Conservation Commission working in conjunction with the Bolton Conservation Trust and an independent group of volunteers the Bolton Trail Committee, have put together an aggressive plan to network many of our Conservation areas to form a 15-mile continuous loop trail in and around Bolton. This trail system known as the "*Bolton Loop Trail*" will serve as the backbone of our Conservation Trail system and link many of the existing Conservation areas along with Conservation areas in Harvard, Hudson, Stow, Lancaster and Berlin. Using new and existing Conservation land and easements, and working with private landowners, the Bolton Loop Trail project will provide a network of trails interconnecting our communities.

The Trail Committee has been active in many locations throughout Bolton, working with developers and private land owners, in the planning and construction of new conservation trails, many of which are to be part of the Bolton Loop Trail.

In April 2004 the Bolton Conservation Commission applied for a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to purchase trail signs to accurately mark the Bolton Loop Trail. The Conservation Commission was notified by DCR this June that the grant for \$2,600.00 has been approved. This grant in conjunction with matching contributions of \$369.00 from the Conservation Commission and the Bolton Conservation Trust (a requirement of the grant application) provides a total of \$3,339.00 to be used for marking the Bolton Loop Trail.

This is a critical step in making the Bolton Loop Trail a reality.

Many sections of the northern portion of the Loop Trail, which stretches from Rt117 at the Bolton Flats to the Delaney Conservation area in Stow along the north side of town, are completed. This grant will allow us to mark and highlight these sections and to designate them as part of the Bolton Loop Trail. During the fall months signs will be placed at trail

heads, road crossings, and trail intersections marking the trails which are part of the Bolton Loop Trail.

In support of all the exciting activity which surrounds Bolton Conservation Trails and their use, a new web site has been created www.hikebolton.com. On this site one can track the progress of the Loop Trail, access information about Conservation Land, download trail maps and read about upcoming conservation events.

ELF In The News

Environmental Learning for the Future (ELF) is a volunteer based program sponsored by the Bolton Conservation Trust where parents teach in the Florence Sawyer classrooms about the natural world. Three lessons are taught each school year. The program is designed to teach children a specific lesson through hands-on projects about the processes and connections and how the environment relates to us. The children learn in inventive ways to appreciate and respect nature and all of its wonders. The reward is seeing them make the connections between their world and the world around them. Read on for a teacher's impression of this program.

Recollections of ELF

I have been involved in Bolton's ELF program since the creation, 19 years ago, when parents, teachers, educators from Vermont and town volunteers gathered together at workshops to discover the magic of nature. We listened, learned, participated, discussed, created and had fun on mini field trips to our outdoor school environment.

In the classrooms the children were treated to adorable puppet shows that were tied in with the chosen theme. I saw the parents enjoying themselves behind the screen playing with all the puppets and their corresponding parts. I think the puppet shows were always my first graders favorite part of the presentation. They would wiggle with anticipation when a puppet would appear. The parents would then present their material in a well-organized manner incorporating books, posters, pictures, slides and real life materials from outside. The children were able to discover for themselves through hands on activities

what is actually under a rotting log. They learned to understand the world of animals while also respecting their original habitat.

Some of the first grade favorites were animal tracks, stone walls and owl pellets. You should have seen their faces when they were gently pulling apart an owl pellet to discover what the owl had eaten for dinner. They were able to sort and classify the bones inside the pellet. Activities like this spark a young child's curiosity for life. I guess that's what ELF is all about. It is an excellent program that involves the children in an experience that they will never forget.

Kathy Barry
First Grade Teacher
Florence Sawyer School



Kathy Barry and Friends

Note: You need no experience to teach ELF in the classroom. The Bolton Conservation Trust funds an instructor to train the volunteers in each classroom.

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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