

The following is an excerpt from the town of Harvard's 2011 Annual Report and summarizes the work of the Land Stewardship Committee for that year.

The second policy is the creation of rules governing allowable activities on town conservation land. Under the guidance of the Commission's Land Stewardship Subcommittee, the Commission approved a set of rules that are consistent with the protection of open space. The full text of these policies can be found on the Conservation Commission's page of the Town website.

Conservation Land Acquisition and Management

In addition to protecting wetlands, the Conservation Commission also helps the town acquire land by gift or purchase for conservation purposes and manages all land so acquired. Over the years, generous citizens have gifted over 30% of Harvard's approximately 2,000 acres of conservation land to the Town. The Commission continued to discuss with landowners the possibilities of future gifts or purchases of land for conservation. Sometimes gifts are monetary, designated for the Conservation Commission's Conservation Fund. The Conservation Fund was established through the Conservation Commission Act, M.G.L. Chapter 40 Section 8C and is dedicated for the specific purpose of purchasing or managing conservation land. Currently the Commission receives funding for open space protection through the Community Preservation Act, but no funds were allocated to the Commission in 2011.

The Commission continued to work with the Bare Hill Pond Watershed Management Committee, supporting its efforts to manage the overall ecological health of Bare Hill Pond in general and the growth of invasive aquatic weeds in particular. (These activities are described by the Pond Committee elsewhere in this report.)

The Land Stewardship Subcommittee (LSS) had a busy year in 2011. In February, the LSS, with help from the neighborhood, completed a project in the Holy Hill conservation area reclaiming a Shaker field, by burning large piles of brush and saplings that had been cut in the fall. Also in Holy Hill, the tall wooden Shaker fence on the Dancing Grounds was painted during the summer.

Maintenance of the fields on town conservation land continues to be a priority for the LSS and despite a very wet late summer and fall all the fields in town were hayed or mowed by the end of October. Many thanks to those who volunteered equipment and labor to mow and to the DPW that is responsible for the majority of mowing. The LSS has also been monitoring invasive species of plants that are an increasing threat to conservation land, especially old pastures and former agricultural land. To address this threat, the LSS developed a proposal for funding submitted to the CPC in 2011 to implement a three-year program to control invasives in five conservation areas.

Within LSS, Phil Knoettner continues to coordinate all the trailwork in town and the unusual weather and damaging storms of 2011 kept Phil and the volunteer trail workers very busy. Hurricane Irene at the end of August and the Halloween snowstorm took down many limbs and trees and made for a lot heavy chainsaw work. Phil also supervised four seniors working on the town's tax credit program. They helped on various projects

including the construction of two bridges, one on Great Elms and one on the Williams land, the fabrication of four new large wooden conservation signs, the painting of the tall fence on the Dancing Grounds and the preparation of 11 new fence posts for that site.

Finally, the LSS designed and procured new signage for the town's conservation land. Residents will notice the new look in 2012 when the handsome signs will be installed on all our conservation land and trails. We would like to recognize and thank the members of the Land Stewardship Subcommittee: Jim Adelson, Bob Benson, Pam Durrant, Phil Knoettner, Ron Kusner, Marc Sevigny and Wendy Sisson and note that the LSS welcomes new members.