

The following excerpt from the Conservation Commission's section of Harvard's 2012 Annual Report summarizes the Land Stewardship Subcommittee's major activities this year.

The Land Stewardship Subcommittee (LSS) had another busy year in 2012. The "freak" Halloween snowstorm of 2011 brought down heavy oak branches across town that required cleanup by trail workers that continued through the snowless winter of 2012. This end-of-October snowstorm scenario was repeated in 2012 with Hurricane Sandy and again required yeoman's work of volunteer trail keepers.

Projects led by Phil Knoettner working with seniors in the Town's tax credit program included the installation of 4 large wooden conservation land signs at Powell, Vesenska, Sprague and Pin Hill. The group also replaced rotted in-ground posts of the low fence on the Dancing Grounds of Holy Hill and rebuilt an 18' boardwalk and a 20' bridge on Millie's Path restoring walking access on the Maxant land along Bower's Brook from Foxglove Apartments to the Post Office. Phil also supervised a Bromfield student who chose to rebuild a bridge on the Small Nature Trail for his senior project.

New signage for conservation land developed in 2011 was posted this year and aluminum trail blazes were designed that will gradually replace old painted and plastic blazes. The LSS reviewed a proposed new snowmobile trail on Dean's Hill and made recommendations to the Conservation Commission and also participated in an initiative of the Harvard Conservation Trust (HCT) to create a "Trail Challenge" to encourage use of Harvard's trails. The LSS recommended appropriate trails on Town conservation land to use for this activity and Jim Adelson worked with Robin Malloy of the HCT to set up the "Challenge" by installing the markers on trails.

Maintenance of the fields on Town conservation land continues to be a priority for the LSS and despite a late start, all the conservation fields in Town were hayed or mowed by the end of October. During the summer, researchers from (Harvard University's) Harvard Forest conducted a study on a population of Baltimore Checkerspot butterflies on the Williams land that has informed our management of the fields and wetlands here to protect and improve the habitat of these special butterflies.

A set of 11 ortho/topo maps of the major blocks of conservation land in Town were completed. These maps include GIS data, can be updated, and are helpful in many aspects of conservation land stewardship.

The invasive plant control project got underway in 2012, with approval at Annual Town Meeting of the Community Preservation Committee's recommendation to allocate \$50,000 for the three-year project. A website/blog was launched (harvardlandstewardship.org) to inform townspeople about the invasives project and other work of the LSS. Additionally, on May 1st, invited speaker Randall Prostak, from UMass Extension's Agriculture and Landscape Program, gave a talk on the global problem of invasive plants and the latest research and

practices used to control them. Wendy Sisson followed with a presentation on Harvard's invasives control initiative. Control work began in summer with herbicide treatments of black swallowwort on Clapp-Scorgie. In November and December the focus moved to the Powell land where brush and trees infested with invasives were cut and cleared.

We would like to recognize and thank the members of the Land Stewardship Subcommittee: Jim Adelson, Bob Benson, Pam Durrant, Dave Kay, Phil Knoettner, Marc Sevigny and Wendy Sisson and note that the LSS welcomes new members and volunteer assistance.