

**The following excerpt from the Conservation Commission's 2022 Annual Report summarizes some of the work of the Land Stewardship Subcommittee.**

*Conservation Land Acquisition and Management*

No new land was acquired by the Town in 2022 but the Harvard Conservation Trust completed a multi-year project when they acquired the former National Grid corridor for conservation, naming it the Eastern Greenway and opening new trails branching off the Tripp land on Brown Road.

The Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) on the Community Harvest Project's land along Prospect Hill Road continued through the approval process during 2022. Once finalized, a permanent trail easement connecting to the Town's Dean's Hill conservation land will be set in place on the southern periphery of Prospect Hill Orchard. This APR has been a multi-year effort with fundraising by the Community Harvest Project, the Town of Harvard, the Harvard Conservation Trust, Sudbury Valley Trustees and the Commonwealth of MA.

The Park and Recreation Commission continued to be actively looking for land for new playing fields and other proposed facilities in 2022. In response, the Open Space Committee continued to update their list of lands with physical attributes making them potentially suitable for athletic fields. The Conservation Commission maintained its opposition to withdrawing land under conservation to meet Town needs for athletic fields.

2022 marked the third year of a controlled deer hunt, permitting bow hunters on selected conservation parcels as part of the deer management program. The number of conservation areas in the program was increased from 12 in 2021 to 13 in 2022, and the number of hunters from 14 to 19. Four does were harvested on two different parcels in October and November. The Commission will continue to work with the Deer Management Subcommittee (DMS) to increase information for the public before hunting season, evaluate the program, and plan for the future. The Commission wishes to thank Bob Douglas, chair, and DMS members Tom Cotton, Ben Urquhart, Joe Pulido and Paul Willard for their hard work and commitment of time to develop and manage this program.

The Land Stewardship Subcommittee (LSS) and a network of volunteers monitor conservation areas and maintain trails. The spring public walk at Vesenska-Black Pond drew a large group and featured vernal pool education and exploration with Harvard resident and wetland scientist, Mathew Varrell. The fall walk was also greatly enjoyed exploring Holy Hill and all the trails saw regular use throughout the year. A mild winter was followed by a dry spring and sustained drought through the summer of 2022, followed by a wet fall.

Beavers blocked the culvert on the Tully land behind the transfer station and a "beaver deceiver" apparatus was installed in September. Three persistently muddy sections of trail (on Holy Hill, Clapp-Scorgie and the Tully lands) were addressed with the application of gravel or loam tailings. Thanks are extended to the Harvard Snowmobile Club for their work on the latter two sites. Another major trail project was the repair of a bridge and boardwalks near the source

of Bowers Brook on the Bolton line. Peter von Conta led a team to renovate this wetland walkway. Robin Carlaw and Bill Calderwood stepped forward to steward the Small Nature Trail on the school property behind Harvard Elementary School, repairing bridges and signage.

A grant from the Nashua River Wild and Scenic Stewardship Council funded the installation of signs identifying Bowers Brook at road crossings throughout Town and the creation of a watershed map that was posted on conservation land and on the Town's website to raise awareness of Harvard's waterways, watersheds, floodplains and wetlands.

Aiding in the effort to develop blight-resistant American chestnut trees, LSS member Brian McClain cared for the orchard of chestnut saplings on the Powell land. With daily watering by hand, over 100 young trees survived the drought and continued to grow successfully in their third year. Four trees produced male flowers.

The spring garlic mustard pull was back this year coordinated with the annual roadside cleanup, and LSS participated in the first year of Earth Day events organized by the Harvard Climate Initiative. Ongoing efforts to manage invasive plants were carried out on Town conservation land using manual, mechanical and chemical methods. Areas of focus in 2022 included the lands of Williams, Powell, Stone, Haskell, Bare Hill Wildlife Sanctuary, Shaker Reservoir, and Dean's Hill conservation areas. Mowing of the fields on Town conservation land was accomplished with all fields hayed or mowed by early October.

The revenues from agricultural licenses on conservation land in 2022 totaled \$3744.25. Harvard Community Gardens flourished on the Coke land off Littleton Road; to request a plot for next year, contact [hcgmembership@gmail.org](mailto:hcgmembership@gmail.org).

We would like to thank the members of the Land Stewardship Subcommittee: Jim Adelson, Pam Durrant, Jim Burns, Brian McClain, Peter von Conta, Rob Traver and Wendy Sisson, plus unofficial members, John Lee and Tom Gormley. We also thank Marc Seigny for clearing blowdowns on trails throughout the Town.