

**The following excerpt from the Conservation Commission's 2018 Annual Report summarizes some of the work of the Land Stewardship Subcommittee.**

Conservation Land Acquisition and Management

In 2018, the town acquired 12.79 acres of land overlooking Black Pond from the Smith family who had generously protected this land under a conservation restriction since 2007. Now, in conjunction with the purchase of an additional 48.4 acres of Smith land across the Littleton line by the Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT), SVT will manage the combined acreage as a new preserve. The "Smith Reservation" will abut Harvard's 64 acre Black Pond/Vesenska Conservation Area, and will provide new accessibility and attention to this beautiful and ecologically important conservation network at the northeast corner of town.

The Commission petitioned the town to fund the diminished Conservation Fund for protection of open space and engaged with the Harvard Conservation Trust to develop strategies for more proactive open space protection and to work on protecting a specific parcel of valued open space. These efforts are ongoing and will continue into 2019.

In response to concern about the effects of deer browsing on the health of Harvard's forests, the Commission established a Deer Management Subcommittee to monitor deer densities and their effect on the landscape and to propose ways to manage deer populations in keeping with MA Division of Fish and Wildlife's goals of 12-18 deer per square mile in this region.

The Land Stewardship Subcommittee (LSS) has developed a growing network of people to monitor conservation areas and maintain trails. Jim Burns is the lead trail keeper and head of the chainsaw crew and Carl Sciple coordinates engagement of individuals and groups to care for trails. Additional trail keepers are welcome to join the group!

LSS organizes two hikes each year to feature the town's conservation areas. The Spring walk in early April explored the scenic HCT Ohlin land down to Bower's Brook and the Kaufman land, with its impressive cliffs, that abuts Holy Hill and extends south towards Route 2. The Fall walk featured Pin Hill and its historically important early slate quarries plus a ramble around the Prospect Hill and Deans Hill conservation areas.

An effort to protect frogs and salamanders crossing our roads when the first "warm" rains arrive in early spring has become a tradition now thanks to the leadership of Brian McClain. New signs were purchased in 2018 and are posted at critical crossing points where migrating amphibians are run over by cars each year. This along with human "crossing guards" and education is aimed at lessening the mortality of these seldom seen, but important members of the local ecosystem.

The Commission supported the town-wide roadside clean up in April with the addition of pulling invasive Garlic Mustard as part of that well-organized effort.

Townpeople will notice five new wooden "Harvard Conservation Land" signs around town, built by Phil Knoettner and installed by DPW. Two bridges were improved, one over Bennetts Brook on Holy Hill land was resurfaced and the Boy Scouts completed a fall project refurbishing the boardwalk over a large wet area near the entrance to the Black Pond/Vesenska network off Littleton County Road. A major project to

repair the Dancing Grounds fence on Holy Hill was initiated and will be continued in 2019. Many thanks to all!

Mowing of the fields on Town conservation land was accomplished with all fields hayed or mowed by early October. The revenues from Agricultural leases on conservation land in 2018 totaled \$4,521.25. 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, Phil Knoettner, Jim Burns, Brian McClain, Carl Sciple, Sydney Blackwell, Bob Benson and Wendy Sisson. Conservation Commissioners and Sta