

The following excerpt from the Conservation Commission's 2021 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 2021. Ongoing projects included the protection of the 78-acre Prospect Hill Orchard owned by the Community Harvest Project. With State funding in place to help purchase an Agricultural Preservation Restriction, (APR), valued at \$2.5 million and commitments from the Town of Harvard through CPA funding, the Harvard Conservation Trust and Sudbury Valley Trustees, the project is nearing completion. \$150k of CPA funds was allocated in 2021 with \$100k requested for 2022 to bring the project to a close. Protection of a 23-acre parcel of land on the market connecting the Clapp-Scorgie and Willard lands to the Sprague land on the western flank of Bare Hill Pond remains a high priority for the Commission, but no progress was made toward this goal in 2021.

The Park and Recreation Commission was active looking for land for new playing fields and other proposed facilities in 2021. In response, the Open Space Committee prepared a list of Town conservation lands with physical attributes making them potentially suitable for athletic fields. The Conservation Commission went on record to firmly oppose withdrawing land under its management from conservation to meet town needs for athletic fields.

2021 marked the second year of a controlled 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 5 to 12 and the number of hunters was reduced from 30 to 14. Three does were harvested on three different parcels, all in December. 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 Padilla 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 had to be cancelled due to the pandemic, but the fall walk on Clapp-Scorgie-Tufts-Smith was greatly enjoyed and all the trails were appreciated and saw increased use throughout another pandemic year. Storms with high winds left debris and blowdowns that were cleared with the help of dedicated volunteers. The educational sign at the South Shaker Rd entrance to Holy Hill was restored and reinstalled and a new large wooden sign was installed at Hermann Orchard.

Four Eagle Scout projects were supported by LSS this year. An extensive boardwalk through rocky and muddy terrain on the Bare Hill Wildlife Sanctuary was built under the direction of Christian Lancelotti, three small map kiosks were designed and built by Matt Zobbi, brother Tim Zobbi carried out much needed improvements on the Tripp land, and John Zobbi built and installed bat boxes on conservation land next to three playing fields around town. Each of these

projects came out very well and truly enhanced our conservation lands. Many thanks to all involved.

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. The 107 well-tended young trees continued to grow successfully in their second year. Tom Gormley joined LSS this summer and has taken on stewardship of Thurston's Cove, coordinating with neighborhood efforts.

Continuing efforts to manage invasive plants were carried out on conservation land using manual, mechanical and chemical methods. Areas of focus in 2021 included Clapp-Scorgie, Williams, Powell, Stone, Haskell, Bare Hill Wildlife Sanctuary, Shaker Reservoir and Hermann Orchard. Mowing of the fields on Town conservation land was accomplished with all fields hayed or mowed by early October.

Four charismatic Hereford calves raised by Rob Duzan on the Haskell conservation land in Still River grew up and moved on and plans were developed to maintain the hayfield there and plant the former pumpkin acreage in native grasses in the spring of 2022.

The revenues from agricultural leases on conservation land in 2020 totaled \$3506.75. Harvard Community Gardens flourished on the Coke land off Littleton Road; to request a plot for next year, contact 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.