

## Annual Report of the Woodland Trails Committee

The Williamsburg Woodland Trails Committee was established by the selectmen to work with interested public and private property owners to enhance trail opportunities in town.

The Woodland Trails Committee has worked to establish awareness of the trail system existing in Williamsburg on both public and private land. The Committee strives to strengthen the coalition of all trail users ( including hikers, skiers, snowmobilers, ATV riders, bikers and equestrians ) interested in maintaining and improving Williamsburg's trails with respect for the individual landowners' rights regarding trail use on their land.

This year the Committee hosted four hikes which attracted a large number of participants, including local families and hikers from neighboring towns. Members lead a winter hike to visit the 3-Town granite boundary marker, then over Old Wolf Hill to the Big View trail lookout. In the late summer we held the Quiet Reflections Benefit Family Hike from the Turner Pavilion. Along the route hikers viewed the Meekins homestead site and Rena's Cave with commentary from local historian Ralmon Black, returning to the pavilion for bag lunch and description of the Angel Park Project by Donna Baldwin. In the fall we teamed up with the Trustees of Reservations naturalist for their Colors of Petticoat Hill hike, which included their introduction to Locke's Loop. This year for the first time, a New Year's Day hike was planned.

Two workdays were scheduled for the Town owned Hall Conservation Area. An Earth Day workday was held where a newly mapped trail was opened and restoration of an old wildflower meadow begun. Footbridge construction and installation over the brook was completed on the fall workday.

A Student Conservation Association application for local trail work was submitted but not approved for 2006. An application for 2007 will be submitted.

Members attended and assisted an informative Learning in Retirement program held at Meekins Library on the history and natural features of the Petticoat Hill Reservation. A naturalist from the Trustees of Reservations led a hike following the talks.

Members of the town's Open Space Committee presented their Five Town Initiative to the committee, a program to identify and protect important town natural resources and open space.

Since Mass. Audubon acquired the O'Neil Hill property last year, we have been consulting with them and laying out trails to develop hiking trail linkages between the town's Hall Conservation Area and the Audubon properties.

The Trails committee and selectmen have been working out an arrangement with Northampton administrators to provide hiking access to Henhawk Trail, which crosses Northampton watershed property. The agreement will be part of their recreation/management plan.

Copies of the Woodland Trails brochure listing publicly accessible trails in town are available at the Town Clerk's office and Meekins Library. These trails may cross public and private property, so users must respect the trails, the property and each other. The Woodland Trails committee requests that all users follow these guidelines when using local trails. Please obey all posted trail use and property signs. Please respect all trail users. Hiking, skiing, biking, horseback riding, ATV riding, and snowmobiling are all important trail uses in Williamsburg. Please stay on the trails, be sensitive to natural and cultural resources, and remove trash if you find it and avoid environmentally sensitive areas.

Visit our website [www.WilliamsburgWoodlandTrails.org](http://www.WilliamsburgWoodlandTrails.org) where you'll find our activities and trail maps posted.

Respectfully submitted,

*Diane Merritt*

Committee members: Paul Jahinige, Chair, Gwen Blodgett, Kathaleen Emerson, John Hoogstraten, Eileen Keegan, Diane Merritt, Michael Reed