

To: Maureen O'Meara, Town Planner

From: Robert C. Malley, Director of Public Works

Date: November 27, 2012

Re: Greenbelt Trails Maintenance Report – 2012

In FY 2012, the Town Council approved funding for a seasonal Grounds Maintenance Worker to provide a more focused effort on the maintenance of our Greenbelt Trail network. The intent was to supplement an existing effort by volunteers and full-time Public Works personnel so that 20 hours per week would be dedicated to trail maintenance and improvements. The success of the improvements accomplished in FY 2012 more than justified continuing the program in FY 2013, which was approved by the Town Council during the annual budget review.

Our staff made great strides in the care of the Greenbelt Trail network this year. The addition of the seasonal position, combined with assistance by our full-time public works staff, allowed us to maintain the trails on a more consistent frequency again this year. Substantial improvements were made on the outer loop of the Town Farm trail leading to Pollock Brook. In addition, the trails in Cross Hill were enhanced with the rental of a walk-behind brush trimmer, which expedited the work for our staff. We also enhanced the trailhead at Winnick Woods, eliminating a long-standing erosion problem adjacent to the parking area.

Brendan Sweeney returned this year as our primary trail maintenance worker. He has an excellent working knowledge of the trail network and the needs of the individual segments. He has offered suggestions on better trail treatments and improved signage. His work ethic, combined with that of our public works staff, has enhanced the overall condition of our trails, which is the primary goal of this program.

Outlined below is Brendan's detailed synopsis of his time and efforts, followed by some personal recommendations. The hours listed also include the hours spent by our public works staff assisting him with his tasks. It does not include any administrative time by Jim Green, the Public Works Supervisor and myself.

2012 Greenbelt Trail Work Summary

Town Center/Spurwink Marsh Trail

Total time spent clearing the Town Center Trail was approximately 12 hours. As the trail was in a satisfactory condition, the majority of the work was done mid summer, with the trimming of overgrown bushes and protruding tree limbs. This was done to ensure that nobody would get hung up on limbs and poked with thorns from the vines. Tree limbs and vines were trimmed back to the sides of the trail. Any fallen or leaning trees were removed ensuring a comfortable walking area on both sides of the trail from the High School entrance to the Starboard Drive including the Gull Crest extension which leads to the Spurwink Marsh bridge. The trail was mowed on average every two weeks in passing to keep the quick growing grass down to a manageable height. The Town Center trail had been serviced periodically throughout the season and is clear and safe to travel

Scott Dyer Trail

Total time spent on the Scott Dyer Trail was approximately 16 hours. This trail is in serious need of help. For 90% of the summer, the center of the trail had been impassible, due to the fact that the trail holds a lot of water in some of the flat spots and the marsh area stays saturated for long periods of time keeping the ground very soft. It has come to my attention that someone local has been taking a four wheeler down the trail periodically which in turn makes it harder to maintain. Ruts from the wheels are created and with constant travel, some areas become soft and very muddy. Heavy equipment cannot be used to maintain the center of the trail where the grass is tall and heavy.

On the other hand, both ends of the trail were reopened up to approximately 100 yards in. Entrances can be found across from the Spurwink Marsh bridge and just across the westerly dead end on Longfellow Drive. All grass areas were weed whacked down while overgrown bushes, vines and tree limbs were sheered and cut back. The Bridge was exposed and ample space was provided for all to cross. A two-section area that leads to the rear of the Village Crossing complex off the main trail were cleared and reopened for pedestrian access. The smaller section consisting of tall grass was mowed and trimmed. The second called for limb and overgrown vine and thorn removal and good weed whacking. The cleared pathway is about 6 feet wide across from end to end. The Scott Dyer Trail has had minimal service this season due to its condition and is about 50% cleared and walk able.

Dyer Woods Trail

Total time spent on the Dyer Woods Trail was approximately 16 hours. I spent one full day removing debris from the woods, from large pieces of plywood, and

miscellaneous lumber to broken furniture, trash, and clothing. All materials were removed and placed on Woodland Road, where it is picked up and hauled off by the Public Works Department. Later in the season large trees that had fallen were cut and removed by myself and a Public Works crew member allowing for unrestricted passage throughout the entirety of the trail. I also fabricated a new signpost and placed it at the main entrance on Woodland Road while placing new signage inside the trail and at trailheads to give pedestrians direction, because there are many sub paths that may confuse people. It took a while to set the posts due to ground in that area mostly being ledge so finding spots that were 2 feet deep of soil proved to be a difficult task

Dyer Woods Trail connector

Total time spent on the Dyer Woods Trail connector was approximately 8 hours. At first I removed several small trees and branches that had been cut by volunteers. Days later I met with a Conservation Commission member and my supervisor in regards to placing sign posts at the trail entrance on Cliff Avenue. There was concern of pedestrians walking on private property and it was felt that the town-owned property needed proper identification. I later fabricated three new sign posts and with the help of a Public Works Crew member we measured 5 feet off an existing fence creating a boundary line abutting a private driveway and placed each sign post approximately 50 feet apart until the open trail entered the woods. In my opinion, I believe that the trailhead along the fence line needs to be cut back more. The higher branches should be removed to keep people on the town-owned property and off private property.

Leighton Farms Trail

Total time spent on the Leighton Farms Trail was approximately 16 hours. Major work consisted of weed whacking the entire trail end to end, while sheering back any overgrown bushes, and cutting any low level or broken branches. One small tree was removed to allow machinery to access the Cross Hill Trail system as it runs along the power lines past the Jordan Farm property. The southern part of the trail as it runs along a private property was opened wider and marked due to a mix up from last season. The pathway that connects Leighton Farms Road to Steeplebush Road was also mowed and weed whacked. Several downed trees were removed from the trail with help of a Public Works crewmember after Hurricane "Sandy" on October 29th. Leighton Farms Trail was checked periodically in conjunction with Cross Hill. It is currently cleared, open and safe to travel.

Great Pond Trail

Total time spent on the Great Pond Trail was approximately 36 hours. In the winter it was brought to my attention that several planks on the floating bridge had been broken and needed replacing. My supervisor, Forrest, made several calls and was soon able to find replacement planks to fix the problem. All together 3 planks were replaced on the floating bridge. Soon after with the help of a Public Works crew member, safety on the trail was improved with the removal of low cut tree stumps. Any small stump within the

walking area south of the floating bridge was cut down to the trail floor to insure there were minimal tripping hazards. General maintenance in the trail consisted of ensuring all trail heads are open and visible, weed whacking grass areas at all ends of the trail, sheering back the vines and cutting low level and hanging branches along with new growth throughout the entirety of the trail, and clearing any debris that had fallen from the storms and high winds. An 8 x 8 informational post at the northern point lookout was rotted and broke off at the ground level. At this point it still needs replacing.

The trail was checked serviced periodically throughout the year. I feel the Great Pond Trail is in good condition, having been cleared and safe to travel.

Spurwink (Town Farm Property) Trail

Total time spent on the Spurwink Trail was approximately 32 hours. Maintenance of this trail consists of mowing the inner loop around the grove of trees and the intersecting path through it and also mowing the outer loop that runs the perimeter of the tree line down to the wooded trail entrance. Bushes, vines and tree limbs are either sheered back to the trail perimeter or are removed through out the southern section of the trail and the grove to the north. I placed new signage to entice people to walk the outer loop which brings them to the southern section of the trail. Yet it seems most people tend to walk the loop around the grove.

This year the big project for the Spurwink Trail was to build up a saturated part of the trail that spanned approximately 200 feet in the wooded area at the southern end of the trail. Because this is a wetland, there are minimal options to overcome this obstacle. So the idea and what is done, is we laid geo textile fabric on the ground and insured it was staked down so it won't bunch up and become displaced. After placing the fabric, I spread 14 yards of material called super humus over the 200 foot area, with the idea this would keep pedestrians above the muddy wet ground while providing a soft walk with adequate traction made with natural material to walk on. Upon further review, a conservation committee member and I walked the path to investigate more saturated areas that call for the same up grades. Another section of about 130 feet was located just beyond the previous work area. We also noticed that there was water runoff that has begun to over take a section of the newly placed material, and our thought is to see if it's possible to place a pipe to get this water to flow under the material instead of over and washing it away.

I am also uncertain when it comes to the bridge that crosses the stream, will it be replaced or relocated? I did happen to cross the bridge and locate the trail section that runs along the backside of the Riverside Cemetery. I began clearing the pathway with my handsaw and marking the trail with orange tape every 25 + paces until I could go no further. I did not have the right tools with me at the time to clear the path because it had totally grown in with vines and thick bushes, though it is marked and ready for clearing next year

The Spurwink Trail from the southern wooded entrance to the northern entrance in the fields are cleared and passable with some minor wet areas, work will continue next year to keep improving the southern part of the trail, and extending the trail behind the Cemetery to the Spurwink River.

Whale Back Way Trail

Total time spent on the Whale Back Way Trail was approximately 28 hours. Maintenance of the trail consisted of weed whacking all the grass areas throughout the trail and insuring the trail heads were open and visible at both ends. All the vines and bushes were sheered back to the trail perimeter and any hanging or low branches were cut back or removed for safety. With the help of a Public Works crewmember, a very large tree that had fallen was cut and removed from the main trail keeping it open to pedestrian and biker traffic. I also fabricated a new sign post and placed it at the trail head on Whale back way about 8 – 10 feet from the road as opposed to having the small plate on a tree 30+ feet from the road. It makes it much easier to see. On the Rt. 77 trail head, I nailed a green reflector to the post in hopes of drawing attention to the trail and hopefully gain it some exposure.

It was brought to my attention that there was a town owned lot across from the Whale Back Way trail head, this lot once contained a trail looping through it. Upon further review, I was given permission to re-open this trail that sat untouched for many years. I used my best judgment and began clearing around the old Greenbelt sign and making my way through the woods. To this point the trail is only 1/3 complete, many small trees and cut limbs had to be removed because there was no place inside the lot to leave them without being out of place and an eye sore.

Currently there is good exposure to the new trailhead and the trail extends about 100 feet into the woods, with hopes of being completed next year. The main Whale Back Trail is checked and maintained periodically throughout the season and is currently in good condition

Stonegate / Loveitt Woods Trail

Total time spent at the SG / LW Trail is approximately 24 hours. Maintenance on the trail consisted of insuring all trail heads were cleared and signage was visible. All bridges were cleared of any debris, and the long boardwalk was sheered and weed whacked back to the large growth perimeter. Bushes, tree branches and vines were cleared from the main path and all grass within the walking area was whacked down to provide a comfortable walk. Trees that had fallen from storms and high winds were identified and removed so that the trail remained clear and open.

Some new planks (as the trail forks right and heads north at Old Fort Road) may be necessary at some point. The area is becoming increasingly wet and the existing planks could stand to be widened and refortified for easier and safer passage.

This trail is in good condition and is checked and maintained periodically throughout the season it is clear and safe to travel.

Cross Hill Trail System

The total time spent at Cross Hill Trail was approximately 60 hours. Maintenance of this trail consisted of opening all trail heads and ensuring all signage was visible from the road. All overgrown bushes and vines were sheered back to trail perimeter, grass areas within the path throughout the trail were whacked down. All board walks and bridges

were cleared up to three feet beyond their ends to make sure nothing protruded into the tight walking areas. A walk behind brush hog was rented to cut down the paths that follow the power lines. The dense grass and rugged terrain create areas that are impassible by the tractor, and after weed whacking the entire pole line trail last year, this machine saves time and makes it a lot easier to get the same job done.

Some areas on the paths were diverted around uprooted trees that blocked the trail. In some of these cases, smaller trees and branches were cut and removed to make this possible which was safer than removing the fallen tree and root system itself. Smaller trees that had fallen due to storms and high winds were removed from the path along with any broken or hanging branches. Extension trails that were not found or cleared last season were worked on this season, most of which connect to Winnick Woods.

The Cross Hill Trail System seems to be the largest, or most extensive trail system. It was cleared in sections based on equipment available at the time. It was periodically checked and maintenance performed to the trail when necessary.

Broad Cove Highlands / Two Lights Trail

The total time spent on this trail system was approximately 48 hours. The maintenance done on this trail consisted of weed whacking all the grass areas throughout the trail or mowing when ever possible. Clearing all the trail heads and ensuring all signage was visible. Bushes and vines were sheered back to the perimeters of the trail. The long board walks were sheered and weed whacked back at least 3 feet to either side, along with the long grass stretch at the southern Two Lights entrance. An area was cleared around the Broad Cove pond for access or just sight seeing. Many thorn bushes had grown together and were spreading to the pond and on the trail, so I removed it all. A grassy area at the north end of the pond was also weed whacked down and cleared for pedestrians. Low new growth brush and grass were sheered and weed whacked back at the first Two Lights for a comfortable walk into the woods.

It is my opinion that many of the boardwalks need to be replaced or fortified on this trail. The wood is beginning to rot in some areas and in others one end will completely rise off the ground when standing on the opposite side. If it is possible, a culvert or a small raised wood bridge needs to be placed where water seeps across the trail and has saturated the area by the old truck axel. I attempted a quick fix and laid cut trees and branches across the wet area to keep people out of the mud. I'm sure there are many solutions to fix this problem.

After the recent storms and high winds the trail was checked for damage. All trees that posed a potential threat to pedestrians were removed with the help of a Public Works crewmember. All fallen debris was cleared from the trail. Currently the Broad Cove Highlands and Two Lights Trail systems are cleared and 90% safe to travel besides the boardwalk issues previously mentioned. Maintenance on the trail is periodically done throughout the season, though it needs to be done on a more regular basis to keep the vegetation under control.

Gull Crest Trails

The total time spent at the Gull Crest Trails is approximately 72 hours. Maintenance consisted of mowing grass areas when possible. Generally all grass areas in and around the trail are weed whacked. Bushes and vines are sheered back to the perimeter of the path making sure there is ample walking room and people do not get caught up by thorns. All trail heads are opened, cleared, and all signage is made visible. Fallen trees are cut and removed, and all debris is cleared from the main trails. Bridges and boardwalks are cleared back at least 3 feet beyond their ends for safety and comfort.

In August, Public Works crewmembers and myself tried to put an end to the deep mud issue on the upland side of the boardwalk on the Fowler Road Connector. We laid out about 100 feet of geotextile fabric to cover the ground, which will both support the gravel and reduce the amount of growth on the trail. Ensuring it was staked to the ground, we trucked in 5 – 6 yards of gravel, which was spread on top of the fabric from the start of the boardwalk to about 20 feet shy of the wooded entryway where the fabric ends and compacted it to make sure it was solid. To this point the gravel is holding up well, with hopes it will hold up for years to come.

Following a heavy rainfall, a 4" drainage pipe on the northerly end of the Fowler Road Connector gets exposed and pushed up from the ground. On each occasion it has been reset. More gravel or crushed stone needs to be brought in to cover the pipe and anchor it down. The pipe should be monitored to see if it needs to be relocated, or if something more needs to be done.

Two broken planks were replaced on the floating docks on the outer trail; the reason for the break is unknown.

I would like to note that some of the culvert pipes on the Nordic trails are washing out along the sides or the material has settled pretty deep. Either way 70% of all the pipes on the trail need to be refilled with gravel it seems there is potential for a hazard.

This summer, I noticed a trail that cut from the top of Dennison Drive over to the Gull Crest Field upper parking lot and a trail that led down to and behind the football fields. I was unsure and took it upon myself to clean up that connector trail and tag it as a Green-belt Trail because it sits directly across the main trail at the top of Dennison Drive. I also placed signage with arrows on the path that leads behind the football fields to the lower entrance of the trail system. I believe it's possibly a snow mobile trail. But I figure it's on town property and it connects the circle around all of the Gull Crest property. I believe if it's marked, people will soon follow it.

Lastly, after the storms and high winds many trees had fallen or were left hanging, cutting off sections of the trail. With help from Public Works crewmembers and some heavy machinery, 15 fallen trees and potential hazards were cut and removed.

Currently the Gull Crest Trail System is clear and safe for travel throughout, besides needing to fill around exposed pipes.

Winnick Woods Trail

Total time spent at the Winnock Woods Trail is approximately 100 hours. Maintenance on this trail consisted of weed whacking the entire parking area down to the lowest bit of grass possible and continuing down and throughout the trail until it connects

to Cross Hill. Sheering was done to widen areas and push back new growth to trail perimeters. Downed trees were cut and removed from the main trail, though in some areas uprooted trees were left and the path relocated to go around these obstacles. Rocks and debris had been cleared from traffic areas, while sub trails that were not located last season were cleared this season. Bridges were cleared 3 feet beyond their ends, while low hanging branches and vines were removed to provide safety for all.

100 hours seems like a lot of time on one trail but it was time well spent. The trail head and parking lot received a total face lift this year starting with the main path way into the trail. Heavy rains washed out the entry way repeatedly with every passing storm. This led to continued grading and scraping of the path and loss of material. I then asked to do a drainage project, which was accepted. I dug down at the top of the path creating a funnel that would lead water to an underground pipe and discharge it to the left side of the path. To keep erosion down I buried 2 wooden parking barriers that divert the water off or to the buried pipe. The remaining gravel was graded smooth and not at too much of a slope and covered with $\frac{3}{4}$ inch stone. Along the right side of the path larger rocks were set in place to control looser soils from eroding and keep it from washing onto the path. Fill was brought in and bucketed over the left side of the path to keep soils and gravel from washing out and off the path. More fill was used to create a smooth transfer from the gravel trail to the grass trail, (more could be added in the future).

Next, more gravel was brought in and used to create a ramp that led to the parking lot down to the lower grass area and around the existing well. This was then compacted many, many times to ensure it was solid. The ramp was adjusted to make sure there was adequate room to get into the existing building. A square was then dug directly in front of the building where four, 8 x 8 posts were set as steps from the parking lot to the building. Finally loads of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch stone were brought in and spread to put the final touches and stop the gravel from washing away. I then fabricated a wooden guard rail and set it in place to the right of the stairs for safety. We don't want anybody falling. All the old plywood was removed from the area and leaves and debris were picked up or blown out from the building and surrounding area. The map case has now been fixed and re-placed back inside the building. All we need now is a map.

The popularity of this trail has grown throughout the summer and fall seasons that lead me to believe the time and effort put in on this trail was well worth it. The Winnick Woods trail is open, cleared and safe for pedestrian and mountain bike traffic.

Conclusion

The 2012 trails season has gone off without a hitch. Due to last season's hard work on the trails, maintenance has become the name of the game for this year. Less time is spent trying to find the trails and more time is allotted to improving them and making sure they are safe and cleared. Following the maintenance schedule is not always easy, surprises in nature happen all the time, which redirect me to do other tasks. Nonetheless, with the help and support of the staff at Public Works, the Town Planner, and the Conservation Commission, we always find a way to get the job done.

I would like to say thank you to all the volunteers who helped work on the trails building bridges and creating boardwalks along with other work. Your service is much appreciated.

Until next year...

Respectfully Submitted,
Brendan Sweeney, Grounds Maint. Worker
November 17, 2012

The story of Winnick Woods



















