

Greenbelt Trails (4114)

\$25,000

This account is used for purchasing supplies to maintain the greenbelt trail network. The Town Planner and the Conservation Commission manage this account.

In the last four years, the Conservation Commission has invested most of its time in preparing the Management of Greenbelt and Open Space Plan (2011) and the 2013 Greenbelt Plan. With these two large policy efforts complete, the Conservation Commission is excited to refocus on greenbelt trail stewardship and implementation of these plans. This fall, it has become apparent that an infusion of capital improvement funding is needed to supplement the annual greenbelt trail maintenance funding.

The Conservation Commission remains strongly supportive of the seasonal Public Works position where 1/2 of the position is devoted to vegetation management along existing greenbelt trails. This employee, supplemented by other Public Works staff, has also taken on some of the straight-forward trail improvements.

Immediate Needs

Several greenbelt trails are showing wear or needs that exceed current staffing availability and funding for materials. The Conservation Commission is recommending a temporary (proposed 2 year) increase in funding for greenbelt infrastructure improvements. If funded, the commission will complete a more thorough evaluation of greenbelt infrastructure needs, establish priorities and refine costs/request bids. To illustrate identified needs, however, below is a list of potential projects.

Gull Crest: After years of considering options, the town installed a 2 plank wide boardwalk along the muddiest portions of the Outer Loop Trail. The Conservation Commission is considering adding up to 400' of boardwalk on the ends of the existing boardwalk and also considering installing a 3-plank wide boardwalk, necessitating adding one plank to the existing system.

Installing 400' plus 1 more plank:

\$8,300

Winnick Woods: The Conservation Commission is looking at an additional trail connection from Winnick Woods to Eastman Meadows. The connection will need a state permit in addition to construction of about 100' of bridging. The Conservation Commission is exploring partnering with NEMBA (New England Mountain Biking Association) to share costs.

Trail connection permitting and construction \$2,500

Town Center Trail: The Town Center trail is located over a sewer line and is one of the best maintained trails in town. It has a mostly grass surface, with a 1'-2' wide worn dirt path and gentle grade changes, except for one wetland overflow location. The Conservation Commission is considering an upgrade to this trail to make it a premier, "accessible to all" trail. One treatment under consideration is to upgrade the trail (from Starboard Drive to "Vinnie's Trail" at Village Crossings) to a 5' wide stone dust path similar to the Cliff Walk in Fort Williams. This would also require constructing a bridge across the wetland overflow channel. Any work would require approval from the Portland Water District.

Town Center Trail stone dust surface \$8,900
Bridge ?

Encroachments: With over 1200 acres in open space protection, the town is shifting from a primarily acquisition focus to more of a management focus. This includes preserving public open space from private encroachment. Currently, encroachments are addressed when they are discovered. Costs to reverse an encroachment include surveying property boundaries and mitigation measures, such as adding plantings along the open space boundary line or installing a fence or other physical boundary marker. The town may want to fund annual encroachment mitigation. Surveying a boundary typically costs about \$1,000 and mitigation measures range from \$750 - \$5,000. Assuming each encroachment includes costs of \$2,000 - \$4,000, an annual budget of \$4,000 would make it possible for the town to address 1-2 encroachment issues each year.

Encroachments \$4,000

Future Needs

In the last decade, the town has tremendously improved the condition of greenbelt trails, including some significant infrastructure additions. From 2001 to 2013, greenbelt trails have grown from 13.5 miles to 24.5 miles, an 80+% increase. The Conservation Commission anticipates that more robust refurbishment projects are on the horizon. The commission will also be revisiting projects that have been on hold. Examples of these projects include:

Spurwink River Pedestrian bridge and boardwalk: The bridge and boardwalk, which is the key north/south town greenbelt connection, was built in 2005. The combined structure is nearing its 10th year and more robust maintenance is anticipated. No cost estimate has been developed at this time and a professional engineering evaluation should be conducted to identify the measures needed to extend the life of the bridge.

Town Farm Trail brook crossing: The Town Farm trail used to cross Pollack Brook and connect to the Riverside Cemetery. The 51' long bridge has slipped its banks and the Conservation Commission has not yet decided on a replacement option.

Greenbelt Plan implementation: The Town Council adopted a Greenbelt Plan that identifies potential trails # 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 10 as priorities for implementation. Most of these priorities will need or would benefit from funding.

Conclusion

The Conservation Commission is recommending greenbelt and open space capital funding to address these types of projects, which are beyond the financial reach of the annual greenbelt funding of \$10,000. We are recommending \$25,000 annually for the next 2 years, which would include \$4,000 for encroachments.