

Town of Shelburne

Open Space Committee

2023 Annual Report

The Open Space Committee is a collaborative committee with representatives from the Planning Board, the Recreation Committee, the Conservation Committee and the Agricultural Commission, along with at-large members appointed by the Selectboard.

Members of the Committee serve on the Community Preservation Act Committee and the Municipal Vulnerability Committee, and represent the Town on the Woodland Partnership of Northwestern Massachusetts to work on strategies to advance sustainable and productive woodlands, land conservation, and economic development in the region.

The Committee works collaboratively with the Franklin Regional Council of Government (FRCOG), and the Deerfield River Watershed Association to preserve and protect open space in Shelburne.

Open space is defined as, "land that is undeveloped, generally without paved roads or permanent structures, which includes, but is not be limited to, land to protect existing and future well fields, aquifers and recharge areas, watershed land, agricultural land, grasslands, fields, forest land, fresh water marshes and other wetlands, river, stream, lake and pond frontage, lands to protect scenic vistas, land for wildlife or nature preserve and land for active or passive recreational use such as the use of land for community gardens, trails, and noncommercial youth and adult sports, and the use of land as a park, playground or athletic field."

The Open Space Committee continues to value the efforts of our many citizens who support the goals of encouraging recreational access and protecting and preserving open space in the Town of Shelburne.

This year the Committee devoted significant time to updating the 2013 Shelburne Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), working with Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) using Commonwealth of Massachusetts, District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) funding and funds from a Woodland Partnership grant. As part of this process, the Committee gathered citizen input through:

- **A Community Questionnaire:** solicited comments from community members via a questionnaire about their priorities in regards to open space and recreation. 252 responses were reviewed and tabulated, and incorporated in the development of the updated Open Space and Recreation Plan (Winter/Spring 2023)
- **Community-wide Meeting:** Held a community meeting in the town hall to introduce the draft Open Space and Recreation Plan, and received input from town residents. (October 2023)

A Plan update is required by the Commonwealth every seven years, and qualifies Shelburne to apply for grant funds. The Draft plan was submitted for review to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in December 2023, and was approved.

Another major project this year has been continued work with the Recreation Committee on the Shelburne Trail system. Committee members and volunteers worked to clear brush and fallen trees, refresh blazes, remove invasive species, and maintain trails on Massaemett Mountain, Wilcox Hollow, Franklin Land Trust Conservation Area, and the Wooded Loop Trails.

The Open Space Committee partnered with the Arms Library, Shelburne Falls Senior Center, and the Deerfield River Watershed Association to host guided interpretive hikes within Shelburne attended by many citizens.

- **May 21, 2023:** Lady Slipper viewing hike at Audubon's High Ledges
- **June 10, 2023** Town Trees Walk in the village of Shelburne Falls
- **September 10, 2023** Late Blooming WildFlowers Hike at Audubon's High Ledges

Other accomplishments this year included:

- **Town Newsletter Contributions:** Published Open Space Committee articles in each of the 2023 Town's Newsletters.
- **Tree Planting:** Planted trees on the playing field at Buckland Shelburne Elementary School (BSE) to support restoration of wetlands and riparian vegetation – a collaborative effort with the BSE, Woodlands Partnership of NW Mass, Deerfield River Watershed Association, and the Northeast Forestry Foundation. (October 2023)
- **Commented on proposed changes to the to the Gardner Falls Hydro Project:** Partnered with the Town of Buckland and the Deerfield River Watershed Association to submit comments on Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)'s proposed changes to the Gardner Falls Hydro Project - Recreation Plan, which would affect recreation sites in both Shelburne and Buckland.
- **Wilcox Hollow clean up and maintenance:** Took part in clean-up and maintenance of vegetation along the Wilcox Hollow Road and encouraged the owners of the road to restore the washed-out sections of the Wilcox Hollow Road to the Deerfield River recreation area.
- **Bridge Street Overlook:** Assisted the Town to develop, issue, fund, and inspect a contract to clear invasive tree species from the Bridge Street Scenic Overlook of the Deerfield River (December 2023)
- **Mill Road trail survey:** The Committee continued to work on developing a route for a safe and legal way for the public to access and enjoy land gifted to the Town by Lillian Davenport on the riverfront, and as part of this project initiated a contract to survey the Mill Road layout and land ownership along the Deerfield River downstream of the Salmon Falls potholes to gain information in regards to potential easements across two private property parcels for a proposed riverside trail.

Through the efforts of many citizens using techniques such as conservation restrictions, Agricultural Preservation Restrictions, and tax incentives (such as Chapter 61), residents of Shelburne have identified over 5,600 acres of agricultural land, woodlands and open space in the Town with some level of protection from development. (37.1% of the Town's land area.)

It is the privilege of the Open Space Committee to work with landowners as stewards of open space, and we are grateful for the support of many townspeople committed to preserving open space, agriculture and the rural character of the Town, and to the individuals who have contributed to the Open Space Donation Account this year.

At-large Members:

Joel Dwight
Larry Flaccus
Garth LaPointe
Joan LaPierre
Jim Perry
David Schochet
Nina Talayco
Peggy Warwick
Laurie Wheeler

Board Representatives:

Recreation Committee, Norman Beebe
Agricultural Commission, Carolyn Wheeler
Planning Board, John Wheeler
Conservation Commission, Norm Davenport