

Town of Shelburne

Open Space Committee

2024 Annual Report

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

Members of the Committee serve on the Community Preservation Committee, the Deerfield River Wild & Scenic River Study Committee, 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 limited to, land to protect existing and future well fields, aquifers and recharge areas, watershed land, agricultural land, grasslands, fields, forest land, freshwater 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.

The updated 2024 Shelburne Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), was adopted in 2024, after working with Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), and much public participation, using Commonwealth of Massachusetts, District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) funding and funds from a Woodland Partnership grant.

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 Massamet Mountain Fire Tower Trail and Ridge Trail, Wilcox Hollow, Franklin Land Trust Conservation Area, and the Wooded Loop Trails.

The Open Space Committee partnered with the Deerfield River Watershed Association to host guided interpretive hikes within Shelburne attended by many citizens.

- **May 2024:** Wooded Loop Trail – Wildflower Hike
- **June 2024:** Lady Slipper viewing hike at Audubon's High Ledges
- **September 2024:** Wooded Loop Trail – Wildflower Walk

Other accomplishments this year included:

New Trail Construction: Constructed a new Red Loop Trail to further expand the Wooded Loop Trail system.

- **Trail Maintenance:** It is not enough to construct new trails, but it is critical that they be maintained too. The Open Space Committee maintained all of our trails including removing deadfall, installing and cleaning out water bars, repairing what minor vandalism we had, mowing open areas that tend to grow back to grass, resupplying trail maps at the trailhead kiosks, etc.
- **Town Newsletter Contributions:** Published Open Space Committee articles in each of the 2024 Town's Newsletters.
- **Tree Planting, Maintenance, & Monitoring:** Monitored and maintained trees that we had helped to permit and plant in 2023, 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.
- **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:** Constructed and installed a “Deerfield River” sign on the fence along Bridge Street at the popular Deerfield River Overlook. Monitored invasive species regrowth at the overlook with an eye toward the need and timing of future mechanical, vegetation treatments.
- **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 continued with 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 private property parcels for a proposed riverside trail connecting Town-owned lands.

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
Peggy Warwick

Board Representatives:

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