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## 2018 Durham Land Stewardship Highlights

By Ellen Snyder, Land Stewardship Coordinator  
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**The Land Stewardship Coordinator** works in consultation and collaboration with the Durham Land Stewardship Subcommittee to coordinate land stewardship activities, responsibilities and opportunities on town-owned lands, fulfill conservation easement obligations, and provide information through property signage, town website, Friday Updates, kiosks and other forums to inform and engage the public in caring for and enjoying town lands. Many volunteers, conservation partners, the Conservation Commission, and town staff at Town Hall and Department of Public Works (DPW) are key to the stewardship accomplishments. This is a contract position for 500 hours per year.

### STEWARDSHIP OF TOWN-OWNED LANDS

#### **Oyster River Forest (ORF)**

##### ***60-acre Early-Successional Habitat Project***

- The Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD) completed a second year of targeted herbicide treatment of invasive plants. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) funded the \$8,702 cost.
- The Land Stewardship Coordinator hand-pulled the invasive wild parsnip. This was the 5<sup>th</sup> year of control and the population is declining.
- The Land Stewardship Coordinator wrote and submitted a \$9,050 grant request to the State Conservation Committee (“moose plate”) for a final year of herbicide treatment of invasive plants in 2019 (funding decision in Dec 2018).
- The 20-acre meadow and 30 acres of young forest are popular with birders and offer an attractive trail route for runners, walkers, and bikers.

#### ***Trails, Public Access, and Interpretive Signs***

(Funding for these projects from the ORF Trails Expendable Trust)

- Completed trail map and interpretive signs for the entrance kiosk. Posted signs that hunting is allowed on ORF.
- Installed trail markers.
- Hired a contractor to mow the trail bi-weekly.
- Designed and purchased new Town Property Boundary signs.
- Hosted 50 U.S. Forest Service staff for a field trip as part of their regional meeting. Hosted a Parks & Recreation public walk on “Forest Bathing.”
- Placed three Leopold benches along the trail, built by the Community Church of Durham as part of their Spring Service Project.

#### **Milne Nature Sanctuary**

- The Milne Nature Sanctuary working group is partnering with a Landscape Designer to craft a Master Concept Plan for the site, which includes improving trails, native plantings, brush and invasive removal, and other site improvements. Funding provided by the Milne Trust.

## **Thompson Forest**

### *15-acre Habitat Project*

- Coordinated the planting of nearly 9,000 native shrubs. NH Fish and Game funded the cost of the shrubs (\$6,450). The planting was done with the help of Liberty Mutual and other volunteers, Land Stewardship Coordinator, and NH Fish and Game staff, who collectively contributed about 150 hours.
- Received a \$4,000 pledge from NH Fish and Game to support mechanical control of invasive plants in 2019.

### *Trails, Public Access, and Interpretive Information*

- Coordinated the completion of a final Phase IB Archaeological Study by Monadnock Archaeological Consulting to assess potential impacts of trail location. The \$1,977 cost was funded from the Durham Conservation Land Use Trust.
- Coordinated a volunteer work day with UNH Theta Chi Fraternity and town volunteers to install a trail bridge and entrance sign. DPW provided gravel and wood chips for trails that were spread by a volunteer
- Worked with a Boy Scout to complete his Eagle Scout Project, installing sign posts along the Thompson Forest trail.
- Hired a contractor to mow the trail bi-weekly (funded from the Conservation Commission Fund)
- Completed a trail map and installed map and other interpretive information on the kiosk and on trail sign posts. Working with Lamprey River Advisory Committee on a final interpretive panel which they are funding.
- Led a Parks & Recreation winter snowshoe hike. Led a field trip for 40 participants as part of a UNH Cooperative Extension Invasives Academy.
- Placed three Leopold benches along the trail, built by the Community Church of Durham as part of their Spring Service Project.

## **Doe Farm**

- In partnership with the Trustees of the Trust Funds, Land Stewardship Subcommittee, and Conservation Commission, developed a map and list of stewardship priorities that include trail improvements, invasive removal, installation of kiosk and signage, improved entrance and parking.
- Coordinated and worked with contractors on mechanical removal of invasive plants, as part of a multi-year control effort. Funding in 2018 provided by the Durham Conservation Land Use Trust and a private donor.
- Coordinated with two town volunteers to launch a \$16,000 private donor fundraising effort to compliment town funds.
- Coordinated a volunteer work day to improve a section of trail; included members of the Theta Chi Fraternity and town residents. Planned a second volunteer work day to brush out new trails.
- Worked with a volunteer to flag new trails, remove trash, and begin brushing out of trails.
- Coordinated with the Heritage Commission and the NH Department of Historic Resources on appropriate interpretation and stewardship of historic cemetery and foundations.
- Working with a Boy Scout on their Eagle Scout project, building picnic tables, benches, and sign posts.

## **Wagon Hill Farm (WHF)**

- Contributed to the NH DES Aquatic Mitigation Fund grant application for the Living Shoreline Project.
- Coordinated trail and bridge reconnaissance with a trails consultant for WHF trail improvements.

## **CONSERVATION EASEMENTS**

### *Easement Stewardship*

- Worked with the respective landowners of the two Fogg conservation easements to ensure compliance with the easement terms.
- Investigated and resolved abutter violation of the SPNHF-held conservation easement on the Weeks Lot.

### *Annual Easement Monitoring*

- Coordinated with the contractor who monitors the Capstone conservation easement, funded by the Technology Drive Fund, which is specific to this easement.
- Completed the monitoring of the following town-held conservation easements:
  - Fogg #1
  - Fogg #2 (Caravan/Bennett)
  - Merrick
  - Powder Major
  - Oyster River Forest (a town-owned property with NRCS and LCHIP-held easements, that requires the town to monitor)

## **OTHER**

- The Land Stewardship Subcommittee met monthly to discuss stewardship issues, projects and priorities
- Contributed 30 pieces to the Administrator's weekly Friday Updates.
- Worked with the Trustees of the Trust Fund and Town Council to create the Durham Land Stewardship Patron's Trust.
- Hosted two summer stewardship interns for two weeks, funded by UNH Cooperative Extension. Interns worked with the Land Stewardship Coordinator on invasive removal, trail clearing, and easement monitoring.
- Drafted trail recommendations for the proposed trails at the new Riverwoods Community.
- Utilized the UNH Cooperative Extension Tool Sharing Library that provides all necessary tools for volunteer work days and posted work days on their Nature Groupie site, a volunteer recruitment calendar.
- Conducted field reconnaissance and due diligence for the "Meadows" property that was donated to the Town.
- Researched, designed, and purchased new "Conservation Easement Boundary" and "Town Property Boundary" signs. Funded by the ORF Trails Expendable Trust and the Conservation Commission Fund.
- Met with conservation partners to discuss stewardship of The Sweet Trail. Met with UNH Woodlands Manager to discuss public access and allowed uses on abutting property trails.
- Collaborated with two town volunteers to develop improved information for the Town website related to town properties and trails. Collaborated with Celebrate Durham to highlight Durham trails and conservation areas.