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## 2019 Durham Land Stewardship Highlights

By Ellen Snyder, Land Stewardship Coordinator  
December 9, 2019

**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 to 600 hours per year.

### STEWARDSHIP OF TOWN-OWNED LANDS

#### Doe Farm

- A private donor fundraising effort, coordinated by Durham residents Malin Clyde and Ann Welsh, raised more than \$18,000 for improvements to Doe Farm. These funds, augmented by Town conservation funds, helped accomplish the following:
  - Four trail bridges built by the Student Conservation Association (SCA) NH AmeriCorps
  - Four trail bridges built by volunteers under the guidance of Conservation Commission member John Nachilly
  - A stone culvert restored and trail crossing improved
  - A new informational kiosk installed with interpretive panels and trail map; began drafting two historical interpretive panels with the Durham Historical Society
  - Replaced entrance sign
  - New trails added and existing trails improved and blazed, resulting in 3+ miles of trails at Doe Farm, open to walking, running, snowshoeing, x-country skiing, and mountain biking. Trail work completed by many volunteers including town residents, UNH ROTC, UNH Theta Chi fraternity, other UNH students, SCA, and UNH Stewardship Interns
  - Four picnic tables, two Leopold benches, and several sign posts installed by Ben Slama, for his Eagle Scout project (Troop 154)
  - Entrance road, clearing, and burial ground mowed
- Contractors continued multi-year effort to control invasive plants throughout the forest to improve woodland health, as well as around the Doe homestead cellar hole and burial ground
- Met with NH State Archaeologists to discuss appropriate interpretation and stewardship of historic cellar holes on Doe Farm, as well as Langmaid Farm and Oyster River Forest
- PanAm Railroad installed a gate at the railroad entrance at Doe Farm parking lot, at town's request

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

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

- The Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD) completed a third year of targeted herbicide treatment of invasive plants. This was funded by a grant from the NH State Conservation Committee (“moose plate”) and the Durham Conservation Fund
- The Land Stewardship Coordinator hand-pulled invasive wild parsnip, for the 6<sup>th</sup> year of control of this plant
- 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.
- For the second year, the Conservation Commission funded mowing of the trail
- Met with the New England Cottontail (NEC) management team (state and federal agencies) at Oyster River Forest and Thompson Forest to discuss habitat management of the meadow/shrub/young forest areas for NEC and other wildlife

## **Milne Nature Sanctuary**

- The Milne Nature Sanctuary Committee began implementing a management plan, including the following:
  - Removal of overstory invasive Norway maples (and stump removal) by Orion Tree Service
  - Hosted volunteer work days to pull invasive plants, plant perennials and native shrubs, spread wood chips along paths, rebuild a stone wall
  - Hosted Dr. Cathy Neal, UNH Cooperative Extension Horticulture Specialist, to discuss creation of a pollinator meadow with native plants. The first phase of meadow creation was begun by placing cardboard and wood chips over the area to smother weeds. Planting will occur in 2020. This effort was led by committee member John Hart
  - Volunteers included Master Gardeners and other town residents, UNH Theta Chi fraternity, Phillips Exeter students, AmeriCorps. The DPW crew assisted with several aspects of these projects
- Project funds come from the Milne Trust

## **Thompson Forest**

- The tree stumps in a section of the trail through the meadow were ground down by Orion Tree Service, to allow for easier trail mowing. Both the stump removal and the bi-weekly trail mowing funded by the Conservation Commission
- Hosted several volunteer work days to pull invasive glossy buckthorn in the woodland
- Hosted a Master Gardener class to discuss invasive plant identification and management
- Eric Donovan installed a picnic table, two Leopold benches, and two sign posts at picnic area on shore of Lamprey River for his Eagle Scout project (Troop 154)
- Worked with the Lamprey River Advisory Committee (LRAC) to complete an interpretive panel for the kiosk. The kiosk and the panel were funded by LRAC. Co-led a walk with LRAC on the Thompson Forest Trail, including history of the property by Durham resident Dick Lord

## **Orchard Drive Woods**

- Assisted with acquisition of the 25-acre Orchard Drive Woods from the ORCSD
- Coordinated with UNH and NHFG to develop and get approval for trails across their ownership to create connectivity from downtown Durham to Bennett Road
- Assisted with a ROW easement between Town and UNH across Orchard Drive Woods to MacDonald Lot
- Hosted 26 volunteers from six towns to build and blaze a new trail across the property to East Foss Farm
- A grant application to the NH Recreational Trails Program for \$80,000 for partial funding of a proposed bridge over the Oyster River was successful; this was led by Durham resident Dennis Meadows

### **Jackson Landing**

- Hosted a volunteer work day at Jackson Landing to re-open and add features to a trail on the north side of Old Piscataqua Road (22 volunteers), in collaboration with Brian Keegan, co-owner of Oyster River Cycle & Sport

### **Knotweed Project**

- Initiated mapping of invasive Japanese knotweed stands throughout town with input from residents
- Collaborated with Doug Cygan, NH Department of Agriculture, Markets, & Food Invasive Species Coordinator, to treat knotweed behind the town hall and along Mill Pond Road. First year of treatment completed in Fall 2019. Also treating other invasive plants along Mill Pond, including glossy buckthorn, multiflora rose, bittersweet, honeysuckle, Autumn olive, privet, and barberry.

### **ANNUAL CONSERVATION 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
- Coordinated stewardship projects and funding with the Conservation Commission and Trustees of the Trust Funds
- Contributed 30 pieces to the Administrator's weekly Friday Updates
- Developed webpages for each town conservation area on the Town's website and created directions, trail maps, property descriptions, and other relevant information
- 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, bridge building, and easement monitoring
- Hosted the SCA NH AmeriCorps for an 11-day hitch at Doe Farm, funded by the Patron's Trust
- Hosted an AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps) for a one work day at Milne Nature Sanctuary. Thanks to the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (GBNERR) in Greenland for loaning this crew for a day
- Assisted UNH Sustainability intern, Justin Klingler, in identifying natural resource metrics for his project
- Assisted several UNH students with class projects, including Civil Engineering Capstone Project on trail connectivity between Durham and Newmarket
- Collaboration with Oyster River Cycle and Sport (a Durham business) to promote more local trail use and volunteer involvement in trail maintenance
- 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.

- Posted boundary signs using the new signs: “Conservation Easement Boundary” and “Town Property Boundary”
- Assisted The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Conservation Commission with acquisition by TNC of the Walker property on Dame Road, which abuts Durham’s Willey conservation area

2019 Land Stewardship Expenditures and Funding Sources							
	General Fund	Conservation Fund <sup>1</sup>	Patron’s Trust <sup>2</sup>	Doe Trust	Grants	In-Kind Value <sup>3</sup>	Notes
<b>STAFF</b>							
Land Stewardship Coordinator	\$36,565						590 hours
<b>VOLUNTEERS</b>							
UNH Nature Groupie Interns						\$3,153	2 interns for 2 weeks: 124 hours X \$25.43/hr
Town Volunteers						\$15,639	615 hours x \$25.43/hr
Doug Cygan, NH Dept of Agric, Markets, & Food							Knotweed control at town hall and along Mill Pond Road
<b>CONTRACTORS</b>							
Invasive control		\$14,590		\$250	\$9,050		Doe Farm and Oyster River Forest (moose plate grant)
SCA NH AmeriCorps			\$10,500				6-member crew for 11-day hitch: Doe Farm bridges
Tree stumping		\$800					Thompson Forest
Trail mowing		\$1,200		\$200			ORF, TF, and Doe Farm
Kiosk		\$1,700					Doe Farm
Stone culvert restoration			\$2,650				Doe Farm
Parking Lot & boundary fence		\$5,400 <sup>4</sup>					Doe Farm
<b>MATERIALS</b>							
Trails and bridges		\$2,600	\$4,200				Lumber & hardware for bridges & fences; work days; trail blazes
Informational signs		\$1,000	\$200		\$1,075		Kiosk panels, entrance signs, trail signs (LRAC grant)
Eagle Scout projects		\$300					Lumber
Other work day supplies		\$200					Snacks, gloves, tools
<b>TOTALS</b>	\$36,565	\$27,790	\$17,550	\$450	\$10,125	\$18,792	
<sup>1</sup> Conservation Fund is primarily from Land Use Change Tax							
<sup>2</sup> Patron’s Fund is from private donations							
<sup>3</sup> Volunteer hours in-kind contribution value calculated by Independent Sector: <a href="https://independentsector.org/news-post/new-value-volunteer-time-2019/">https://independentsector.org/news-post/new-value-volunteer-time-2019/</a>							
<sup>4</sup> Doe Farm parking lot improvements postponed until 2020							