

## **OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION COMMITTEE**

The Open Space and Recreation Committee role is to fulfill the mission *to advance the goals, objectives and actions of the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan, and to serve as a centralizing forum of this effort.*

### **Open Space and Recreation Plan**

Members of the Open Space and Recreation Committee have continued to partner with other town committees, boards, non-profit groups (such as the Lancaster Land Trust and the Lancaster Friends of the Nashua River) to make progress with the ambitious 7-year action plan.

The OSRC will continue to re-affirm the goals of the OSRP, and plan the implementation in order to meet these goals, as follows:

- Water supply protection
- Agricultural land protection
- Forest land protection
- Recreational resource development
- Pedestrian connection development
- Overall land conservation and protection
- Land acquisition

Much progress was made on implementation of the OSRP in 2016, with large strides being made in the areas of forest land protection, recreational resource development, overall land conservation and land acquisition.

### **Parcel Protection**

The Open Space and Recreation Committee also continued to advocate and advise on parcels of interest for land protection. The OSRC continued work with the Conservation Commission and Town Forest Committee to assess the conservation value of all privately and publicly owned properties in the Town of Lancaster that are not currently protected from development under the provisions of Article 97 of the Massachusetts State Constitution. Public land is protected under Article 97 if it is under the care and control of the Conservation Commission or a land conservation agency of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, such as the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) or Department of Fish & Game (DFG). Privately owned land receives Article 97 protection when it is placed under a Conservation Restriction held by the Conservation Commission, a State agency such as DCR or DFG, or a non-profit land trust.

The collaboration by the OSRC, Conservation Commission and Town Forest Committee to assess the conservation value for all currently unprotected privately and publicly owned properties resulted in the creation of a comprehensive Parcel Protection List to use as a guide in

prioritizing land protection efforts. In particular, very high importance has been given to the expansion of the existing conservation areas in the Town, most notably the Cook Conservation Area and the Lancaster Town Forest.

At the 2016 Annual Town Meeting in May, voters approved the transfer of nearly 25 acres of land (Parcels 32-17, 32-18, 32-19 on Hill Top Road) to the Commission's control and management. The Town Meeting vote included the designation of nearly twenty acres of the land (Parcels 32-18 and 32-19) as the "Eugene Christoph Memorial Wild Forest" in memory of Mr. Christoph's many years of dedicated service to the Town of Lancaster in several different volunteer capacities, including Town Moderator, Board of Selectmen, and Zoning Board of Appeals, among others. These parcels protect important wildlife habitat, including vernal pools, and the Eugene Christoph Memorial Wild Forest will never be logged, in accordance with Mr. Christoph's wishes.

Town Meeting approved the transfer of Parcel 13-4 off of Lunenburg Road from tax title to the Board of Selectmen.

### **What's New for 2017**

Some of the OSRC upcoming activities in 2017 will include the continued conservation of open space properties, maintaining the conservation land throughout the town to provide a rural environment for the residents to enjoy, working with potential developers in seeking permanent conservation easements for path systems, and similar ideas for a variety of other conservation-oriented projects.

The Open Space and Recreation Committee meets on the fourth Wednesday every other month at 6:30 PM at the Lancaster Town Hall. Everyone is welcome to join the Committee for these meetings and public involvement is always encouraged.

The Community Development and Planning Office coordinates all meeting schedules and is open Monday through Thursday, 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. As always, we welcome citizen's questions, comments or suggestions. Please feel free to contact us at 978-365-3326 x1311 or at [npiazza@lancasterma.net](mailto:npiazza@lancasterma.net). For more information on open space issues in Lancaster, please visit us on the town's web site: [www.ci.lancaster.ma.us](http://www.ci.lancaster.ma.us).

Respectfully submitted,

**Noreen Piazza, Staff Liaison**