CONSERVATION PROJECTS AND GOALS

The Norwell Conservation Commission’s manages over 2,000 acres of open space within the town and 25+ miles of trails. The commission collaborates closely with other town offices, commissions, schools, and citizens in the management of the property under its jurisdiction. These collaborative efforts have led to an expansion of use and access to Norwell’s Open Spaces through provision of extensive recreational opportunities for all the members of our community.

A common aspect of all of the commission projects shown in this document is that they all foster a sense of community and purpose. Since the initiation of the Community Preservation Act, the Norwell Conservation Commission has been a good steward not only of the lands placed under it’s protection but of the funding sources that have been dedicated to support public access and use.
The Masthead property poses numerous project opportunities. All provide varying levels of free public access to the North River at a point in the stream that is gentle and family friendly.

The options for this property will largely be based on neighborhood involvement and public interest and will range from a simple foot path/portage path to allow access to the existing deck (which needs rehabilitation/reconstruction) to allow either canoe/kayak access to the river or simple quiet enjoyment along the water. The Commission does have an interest in conducting a feasibility study to delineate the resource areas and to determine whether or not a fully accessible ADA/AAB access point on the North River would be feasible.
Carleton Property provides extensive new opportunities for public recreation and access to open spaces. While some parking is proposed on the Carleton property directly, the Commission holds three abutting properties. These include both Miller and Fogg, where additional discreet parking areas can be incorporated as interest and use evolves. These will allow additional access points to the extensive connected trail system without being intrusive to neighbors and abutting residents. (see red circles)

The Trout Brook Hemlock property already contains a paved area which can provide much needed neighborhood connections to this extensive trail systems.
NEW BOARDWALK AND TRAILS IN COLLABORATION WITH THE NORWELL HIGH SCHOOL COMMUNITY CARES PROGRAM

For the past two years, the Commission in coordination with Norwell High School has conducted projects on Conservation Open Space Lands. A few of these projects are listed below.

- Construction of new trails with boardwalks in Miller to allow circular connection to other trails for better public passive recreation (new public recreational options)
- Construction of a small boardwalk at Stetson to allow passage on the larger loop during spring wet weather (pictures below)
- Start of a public picnic area (rehabilitation of a historic stream garden) at Fogg – to be continued this year (pictures below)
- Work on the picnic areas and fishing spots at Jacobs for preservation of recreational use
- Creation of Wildlife Habitat for New England cottontails in Miller Woods (as opposed to Eastern Cottontails which are prolific, NE variety is rare and endangered in most of New England.
- Funding would allow the Commission to continue with similar projects which provide new recreation and preserve existing Open Space Lands and trails for public enjoyment while also providing a unique and valuable collaboration with Norwell High School and other volunteer groups.
Neighborhood connections to already existing trail systems are proposed at Cuffee, and at an unused central trail that is part of the Jacobs Area. Norwell has many trails that run near but not to surrounding neighborhoods. Our goal is to create new recreational opportunities by finding unique trail links to nearby neighborhoods so residents can utilize existing trail networks.

Two projects that connect neighborhoods to existing systems were already created at Wildcat (connecting the new subdivision and existing residences to the entire Wildcat/Donovan system) and at Simon Hill (connecting Simon Hill and the Main St area to both Simon Hill and Bowker St trails).

The current Hatch to Bowker connection boardwalk the Commission is in process of creating (again in cooperation with the Norwell High School Program) is a third ongoing connection project. (picture to the right)

The Hatch to Bowker connection is one of those projects that developed quickly based on suddenly available partnerships and collaborations. As with other projects, the ability by the Commission to respond quickly allowed this longstanding goal to start to be realized.
CONSTRUCTION OF A SMALL BRIDGE ALONG HISTORIC CUFFEE LANE AND CUFFEE TRAIL PARKING ALONG MT BLUE

The newly acquired Cuffee Lane along Mt. Blue St has a few projects that need funding.

The Historic Cuffee Lane crosses one very wet muddy area and a stream that can flow 10 feet in width during the spring rains. Both these areas are at the start of the Lane and need work to make this recently acquired Open Space truly publicly accessible. The Commission has already constructed a public access parking strip along the road there that will allow parking for three cars.

There is a second small dirt (interpret as MUD) parking area that allows access to the red trail area of Cuffee (shown on the previous page). This parking area will be created/rehabilitated to allow public parking and access similar to the recently completed Donovan parking and the currently applied for Wildcat parking project. Currently this is little more than a mud circle that is difficult to use.
Removal of this shack is a necessary rehabilitation project as it poses a safety hazard and contains asbestos. The Commission intends to convert this lot into a public resting area with a simple bench facing the North River so visitors can enjoy the view. No new structures are proposed, no excavation is proposed or needed. Trees will not be removed except as necessary to remove the cottage. Low brush growing through the decking will be trimmed back to ground level. Stony Brook Lane is shown as a black line. There is a single entry point for one car. The lot is small and would not be suitable for a dock or other access due to both size and deed restrictions. However, this property along the North River can be rehabilitated to create a small public recreational area. Should funding permit and federal and state permits are obtained, an osprey nest will be added along the marsh. (see the site plan)
REASON FOR NEED FOR FLEXIBILITY

Having dedicated funds readily available in the Conservation Commission Fund provides the commission with the flexibility to respond to community needs in a timely manner. Collaborative projects include:

- Norwell School Department: Over a hundred high school sophomores and their teachers have assisted the commission on a range of community service projects over the past years.
- Norwell Pathways Committee on a range of projects over the years to expand Public Access to Norwell’s protected Open Spaces.
- More recently the commission has begun to work closely with the Norwell Beautification Committee, the Norwell Garden Club, and the Norwell Schools to develop a wildflower meadow at currently fallow land that is part of the Donovan Farm Fields.
- Education Activities: The conservation commission hosts a number of family-oriented free community education events each year.

Collaborative partners such as the Schools often have very limited and specific time-frames to operate from. Availability varies from year to year. Projects with the High School—the planning process starts in April or May. Availability of classrooms is not known until June. Projects must be completed by September of the same year.

- Projects with the Technical High School are similar. Planning starts in September. Projects are completed by January-February. Interest of the teachers and availability of classrooms dictates which small projects are selected each year. Due to the nature of this system, the Commission must be flexible.
- For other projects such as the Donovan Flower Field/Labyrinth, input by collaborators such as the Beautification Committee and Norwell Garden Club provided information and expertise that shifted the scope of the project to include the entire field. Due to the very limited seasonal timing balanced with the availability of the contractors, in order to prep and seed the Donovan Field we will need to be able to move anytime between March and May depending on the weather.
- Our trail crew also works on many non-maintenance projects. We do not know in advance of each year how many crew members will be assigned, what the collective skill or interest levels will be, or what the scope of needs will be for that year.
- When interest and involvement is expressed by project neighbors or volunteers, we often have a limited window of opportunity to move small neighborhood projects forward.

Timing with Highway and Tree and Grounds also influences successful project work. Work on Conservation projects for trail areas is often conducted around breaks in the official schedule or as materials and staff time become available. Projects can be realized in an affordable manner if the Commission is allowed flexibility to work with Municipal Resources. We often accomplish small goals with relatively short notice. Each of these projects requires funding be available and in place when the various aspects of any pending project come together.

- Ex: Circuit Street is being repaved and the culverts repaired, upgraded and replaced in fall 2020. The Commission has long been advocating a raised sidewalk/boardwalk crossing between the new Donovan Parking Area and the Wildcat Trail system. That section of Circuit St is very treacherous. With funding in reserve and accessible to the Commission, we could easily tack this) on to the pending road improvements at a significantly reduced and minimal cost as compared to the boardwalk being a stand-alone.
The smaller Donovan Field has had two projects completed recently;
- The parking area expansion and picnic area circled in blue
- The connector from the parking area to the pathway shown in red.

Additionally, the field itself is the site of a pending project to create a wildflower meadow, with walking paths, perhaps a labyrinth for the public to enjoy. This will better utilize this public resource and create an open space destination.

This is a collaborative project between Conservation, Norwell Beautification Committee, Norwell Garden Club and Norwell High School Art Program.

The Commission has already contracted with a well know MA Certified Wetland Scientist to amend, prepare and seed the field this spring.
Many of these projects are similar to projects that are still pending throughout the 2,500 acres and 25+ miles of Conservation Land and trails.
Each Conservation Area has an entry. Many of them need rehabilitation or creation and are relatively small 3-5 car capacity. These can often be accomplished by Town Highway and Tree and Grounds as material and scheduling permit and do not require extensive engineering or planning.

KIOSK CONSTRUCTION AND INSTALLATION TO IMPROVE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

As with many projects, the Commission strives to create collaborative projects that engage multiple community groups – with funding, the Commission would expand the kiosk/signage program to all the Town Conservation Open Spaces.