

## **Upton Land Stewardship Committee (ULSC) Annual Report 2011**

In 2011 the ULSC continued with the implementation of the Land Stewardship Plan for the Former Stefans Farm Parcel. In July, the town was awarded a \$6,950 grant by the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) for work at the Former Stefans Farm.

Plots at the community garden were once again made available to Upton residents at no cost. Culinary students at Blackstone Valley Technical High School used two of the plots to grow organic produce for their restaurant and three plots were used to grow produce for the United Parish food pantry. We now have a Community Garden Coordinator making it easier to manage the tasks associated with the garden.

A walk through at the Former Stefans Farm with a wildlife biologist from MassWildlife confirmed that this property has a diverse landscape with a range of habitats. We expect a report in 2012 that will provide guidance in the managing of this property to encourage wildlife.

The Upton Men's Club covered the cost of mowing all the fields at the Former Stefans Farm in 2010, in part to see if the fields could be used for skiing. In 2011 they confirmed the fields were sloped enough to ski.

A grant proposal was submitted to RTP to support trail work at Sweetwilliam Farm, and another for the creation of informational kiosks throughout the town's public lands. Two other grant proposals were made to fund work needed at Sweetwilliam Farm. We are waiting for responses on all four.

A trails group has been formed to keep track of volunteers, maintain and build trails sustainably and to accommodate a variety of users. Members attended several workshops and conferences related to trail building and land management, one of which specifically addressed making trails accessible to those with physical limitations.

Trails have been completed on conservation land off of Howarth Drive at the Glen Echo development. These trails now connect to the trails on the town's easement at Sweetwilliam Farm (SWF) and at the east side of the Whitney Conservation Area (WCA). The east side trails at SWF and WCA now connect to the Upton State Forest and are nearly complete. The parking area is in the process of being made usable.

Existing trails have been maintained. This was particularly challenging because of tree damage from Hurricane Irene in August and the October snowstorm. Several of the downed trees were cut and made available to residents through a firewood lottery.

A special thanks goes out to our local Scouts. Patrick Nigro, with the help of Troop 132, completed an Eagle Scout bridge project at the Eleanor T. Howarth Conservation Land off of North Street that connected with trails at the Warren Brook Conservation Area and Cub Scout Pack 67 picked up litter at Peppercorn Hill Conservation Area. In addition to the many hours contributed by the Boy Scouts, volunteers and committee members contributed 160 work hours to develop the community garden, map and enhance trail networks, and prepare grant proposals.

### **Committee Members:**

Matthew Bachtold-Community Garden Coordinator

Scott Heim

Mike Penko-Secretary

Matthew Ronzio

Marcella Stasa-Chairperson

Cathy Taylor

William Taylor-Trails Group Coordinator

Respectfully submitted,

Marcella Stasa