

## **2015 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE UPTON LAND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE (ULSC)**

In 2015 the ULSC continued with the implementation of the Land Stewardship Plan for the Stefans Farm Open Space. The Community Preservation Committee approved, and the Town voted, to spend, up to \$17,500 for engineering services to evaluate options to improve vehicular access to the property and prepare plans for a recommended alternative .

The ULSC worked on kiosk design, with a prototype nearly complete at Stefans Farm. The funding for the construction of informational kiosks, purchase of signs and trailside interpretive panels comes from a Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant for \$9,252. Brianna Croteau of Milford Girl Scout Troop 30147 constructed a kiosk at the Peppercorn Hill Conservation Area Crockett Road trailhead for her Girl Scout Gold Award project. The total cost of materials for her project was \$898, which included \$285 of donated materials.

For his Eagle Scout project, Brian Spiegelman of Milford Boy Scout Troop 4 installed a trail marking system on the Walleston loop trail at the Peppercorn Hill Conservation Area to make it easier for trail users to follow the trail.

Plots at the community garden were made available to Upton residents at no cost; however, it was decided that in 2016 gardeners will be asked to pay a \$5 participation fee to help defray costs. Full build-out of the Community Garden is nearly complete, which will make 8 more plots available starting in 2016.

The ULSC and Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT) conducted routine yearly monitoring of the Sweetwilliam Farm Conservation Restriction and members of the ULSC accompanied SVT on its yearly monitoring of the Whitney Conservation Area Conservation Restriction.

The ULSC is exploring possibilities for linking Upton's trails to trails in abutting towns. The ULSC submitted a proposal to SVT in 2014 to request assistance for this through a MassLift–Americorps capacity building program that promotes land conservation. Our proposal was approved and in 2015 Jesse Koyen from MassLift–Americorps contributed 120 hours assisting the ULSC by meeting with representatives of Land Trusts and municipalities, preparing a map identifying the existing trails and participating in site visits to investigate possible connections between Upton, Grafton, Hopkinton and Westborough trails.

Volunteers and committee members contributed 251 hours to develop trails and the community garden, map trail networks, prepare GIS maps, work with land owners, write grant proposals, and perform administrative work. Scouts working on Eagle and Gold Award projects contributed another 120 hours. The total value of all the hours contributed by the volunteers, Scouts and committee members was \$13,658, which

includes the \$3,338 value of the Scouts' hours and the same amount for hours contributed by the MassLift–Americorps capacity building program.  
(go to [http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer\\_time](http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time) for more information on valuing volunteer time.)

The Conservation Commission and ULSC received the Forest Stewardship Plan for the Warren Brook Watershed Conservation Area and adjacent town owned land in North Upton it commissioned. The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife and Massachusetts Audubon Ecological Extension Service will be providing supplemental habitat evaluations. The Town was reimbursed for the full cost of the completed plan (\$4,732), and for the cost of an outreach plan prepared by the ULSC (\$230), through a grant from the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

The total value of grants, volunteer hours and in-kind donations is \$28,770.

Respectfully submitted,

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Mary Overholt  
Mike Penko-Secretary  
Marcella Stasa-Chairperson  
Cathy Taylor  
William Taylor