



Groton Conservation Summit Report

By Mary J Metzger

Fourteen organizations shared information at the first Groton Conservation Summit held February 11 at the Groton Country Club. The event was co-organized by the Groton Conservation Trust, the Groton Conservation Commission and the Groton Trails Committee.

Hosted by the GCT and moderated by Mark Gerath, the evening also provided a robust networking opportunity between the many groups and individuals interested in conserving the Town's resources. Ideas were suggested on how to find ways to continue sharing information, whether by website, email lists, or meetings. The group also discussed the possibility of establishing a volunteer coordinator for the town, to help connect interested citizens with volunteer opportunities in conservation. Groton TV recorded the event.

A synopsis of each group's five minute presentation follows:

Groton Lakes Association Alex Woodle: GLA has concentrated on recreation, safety, shoreline erosion, and weed eradication. They are working on educating the public on nutrient loading and storm-water run-off issues that relate to water quality. They also need volunteers with their boat/weed monitoring project.

Groton Parks Gineane Haberlin: Not just concentrating on group sports, the Parks Committee is trying to find ways to use their properties, such as Hazel Grove Park and Cow Pond as passive recreation areas with enhanced trailheads.

Groton Planning Board Russ Burke: The Master Plan involves Open Space and Recreation. In their review of development projects, they are trying to decrease lot size and provide more open space. They also have a goal of increasing pedestrian ways.

Groton Turtle Conservation Darcy Donald & Joan Caruso: Working with Girl Scouts, they have been using the State's studies to determine sites of turtle mortality due to roadkills. Together with the NRWA they hope to enhance turtle nesting sites in town. They've done some education programs in the schools. And they are working with Linking Landscapes, a collaboration between the Massachusetts Department of Transportation and Fish & Wildlife to use citizen scientists to help reduce road mortality of turtles.

Hazel Grove Park Linda McCrossan: They hope to develop Hazel Park as a great trailhead with improved maps, parking. They lease the park to two groups, Groton Pony Club and Groton Riding and Driving Club who have volunteered many hours helping with maintenance.

Mass Department of Fish & Wildlife Pat Huckery & Anne Gagnon: They help manage 1,380 acres in Groton. Office in Ayer, they see Groton as the epicenter for the Threatened Blandings Turtle and are

looking for ways to provide “Turtle Gardens” for growing baby turtles. They’d like to give input on siting trails in light of turtle preservation. They also have information on the importance of controlling deer to maintain healthy forests, and ways to evaluate deer browse.

NDO Mountain Biking Club Scott Stathis A Groton based club that has become regional, they are interested in trail maintenance and decorum. They spend the winters cross-country skiing and provide last-minute group opportunities for these activities at their web site ndomountainbiking.com.

Nashua River Watershed Association Al Futterman & Stacy Chilcoat: They have introduced outdoor wellness walks on the Rail Trail and hope to establish a Healthy Heart Trail Guide to spotlight easy and moderate trails. They provide a canoe and kayak guide. They are looking for more funding to support their Water Chestnut invasives removal program. They have worked on the Pipeline issue and the proposed Squannacook Rail Trail. They have submitted a proposal for the Nashua River Greenway to compete for dollars from the Massachusetts Forest Legacy Program. They continue adult, family and school-based education programs and are always open for ideas in these areas.

Groton Greenway Committee David Pitkin: They can use volunteers with their River Festival, which is scheduled for Sunday, June 7. They are looking at ways to find an ecological use of the Old Town Dump Parcel.

New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF) Chris Pryor: They work to educate private landowners in New England on sustainable forestry practices. They hold conservation easements on over a million acres in New England. In Groton, they have 1,000 acres of demonstration sites, including the Wharton Plantation Sabine Woods, and Unkety Brook.

Squannacook Rail Trail Committee Steve Meehan: They have just this week signed a lease with the MBTA for rights to develop the Squannacook River Rail Trail, the first leg to be built from Bertozzi Conservation Area to Depot Street, Townsend. They hope to start soon with a fund-raising/membership campaign with the goal of breaking ground for the trail in Spring 2016.

Groton Conservation Commission Peter Morrison: Since its inception in 1963, the group has worked to implement the regulations of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, and since 2001 the local Wetlands Protection By-Law. They manage over 2,100 acres of town conservation land. They are working on a long-term inventory of their properties to evaluate habitats, biodiversity, and invasives.

Groton Trails Committee Paul Funch: They maintain over 110 miles of trails in town. They are enhancing the maps on their website. They have re-applied for a state grant to build a handicapped accessible trail in the J. Harry Rich State Forest. They are planning a “Connecting Communities” event to be held in Groton May 31.

Groton Conservation Trust Bob Pine: After 50 years, the group has achieved full land trust accreditation from the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the national Land Trust Alliance. They are doing baseline studies of their 40 properties to focus on use and maintenance. They are planning a renovation of picnic grounds near the General Field. They are doing invasives control research on Shepley Hill. They have formed an Advisory Council to enlist ideas from outside their board of trustees.