

Preserving open space



MEDWAY -

David and Grace Hoag watched their kids grow up playing on their 15.5 acre property on Winthrop Street and building tree houses.

Now, with their kids grown, the couple wanted to make sure the natural landscape is protected forever - donating it to the Upper Charles Conservation Land Trust.

"(The land has) got a lot of variability in it and we wanted to preserve it forever," said David Hoag. "The only way we felt we could do that is to not give it to the town - where the Legislature could overturn it if they want to put in a road or a school - so we donated it to a private land trust."

The couple subdivided their land - so their house was on one parcel and the 15.5 acres of natural undeveloped land on another - and donated the land with fields, woods, meadows and a small pond to the Upper Charles Conservation Land Trust, said Jim Wieler, Upper Charles treasurer and Medway representative for the group.

"Although Medway appears rural we have very little protected open space in Medway," said Wieler. "The land people view as open is usually ... not protected as conservation land from development."

The land was filed under the Norfolk Registry of Deeds by the Upper Charles Conservation Land Trust, which protects it from being developed, said Wieler.

"What we hope to do with the land is open it up for public access, walking trails and nature walks," said Wieler.

The Hoags - who have lived there since 1953 - will retain life estates on the property - meaning there will be no public access to the property while the Hoags are still alive and living on the property, said Wieler.

Hoag said he used to serve on the Open Space Committee - which the Planning Board is working to reform.

"I support open space a lot. ... It's important because we need that land to take the rain water and fill our aquifer," said Hoag.

When the Hoags' kids were growing up they built tree houses and swam and fished in the land's pond, said Hoag.

"I've also gone out and done nature walks with school kids who were doing projects collecting fall leaves," said Hoag.

The Hoags also made a donation to the Upper Charles - which owns and maintains the land - so they can do needed work on the land, said Wieler.

The Upper Charles owns more than 300 acres of open space in Holliston, Medfield, Medway and Sherborn and is committed to promoting conservation of and education about land, said Wieler.

"The Hoags and the Upper Charles have a common purpose in conserving the land. We are pleased to be selected as the stewards of this important piece of conservation land," said Upper Charles Chairman George Fiske in a press release.

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WEB BROWSING REDEFINED  FIREFOX 2

Groups pitch in to preserve 1,000 acres

Passive recreation eyed for large forest

By **Connie Paige**
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

A sweep of more than 1,000 acres of undeveloped, heavily forested land in Milford, Holliston, and Hopkinton will remain wild now that a group of local officials, conservationists, philanthropists, and mountain biking enthusiasts have come together to save it.

The latest preservation efforts are focusing on a triangle-shaped wooded area, roughly bordered by the Charles River and Route 85 on the west, Interstate 495 on the south, and Route 16, Adams Street, and Hanlon Road on the east.

Local officials say the initiative will help protect the unique habitat and provide an attractive natu-

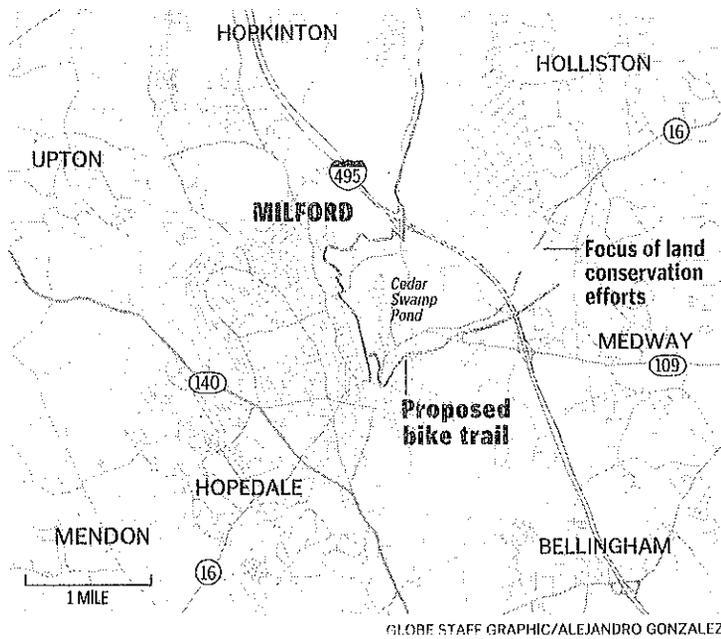
ral setting for passive recreation.

"I'm all excited," said Robert Buckley, Milford's Conservation Commission chairman, who has worked for years to help preserve the area. "Inside [Interstate] 495, it's probably one of the largest areas of contiguous space that's not developed."

Holliston's conservation agent, Jane Sears Pierce, said she believes the communities, with the help of the state, can keep the area from the surge of residential and commercial development that has engulfed much of the western suburbs.

"No one can really tell what will happen in the future," Pierce said. "But they still have Central

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BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE

NOVEMBER 2, 2003

Groups pitch in to save 1,000 acres

► **LAND**
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Park, right? It will be that kind of thing."

But this, of course, is not likely to be nearly as manicured as Central Park: It is studded with trees, veined with streams, and dotted with unexpected vernal pools and meadows. Most of the land has no roads, only an occasional foot trail or herd path.

A visitor does not have to look very far in certain parts to find blueberries and huckleberries. Numerous birds make their homes here, including great blue herons and several types of hawks.

Naturalists believe the area is a suitable habitat for mammals such as bobcats, fishers, and otters. Pierce said that aside from many snakes and amphibians, the land is home to at least three endangered species: the four-toed salamander, the wood turtle, and the spotted turtle.

The initiative to preserve the entire 1,000 acres has been a joint effort among Buckley, Pierce, and the New England Mountain Bike Association, working with a diverse group: selectmen and other local and state officials; community and civic organizations; the Mil-

ford Water Co.; and two environmental groups, Trustees of Reservations and Upper Charles Conservation Inc.

The protected property stands as part of an undeveloped 2,500-acre expanse of land and bodies of water at the headwaters of the Charles River. Within the triangle are about 1,260 undeveloped acres, of which about 700 have so far been protected. The aim is to acquire the rest of it as well as properties outside the triangle.

"We would like to preserve the rest of that land," Buckley said.

Some open space in the area has been under municipal control for some time: Milford has undeveloped town property just outside the triangle on the west. Holliston owns a large piece inside in the northeast quadrant. In the north, Hopkinton boasts the 11-acre College Rock Park, a favorite destination of rock climbers.

Slowly, the towns have been

buying more to fill in the gaps. About three years ago, Milford acquired about 90 acres east of Route 85 and contiguous to the Holliston land through tax-title takings. Milford purchased for \$1.1 million another open piece off Dilla Street outside the triangle but adjacent to it. The town is also

working with a developer of a 128-acre parcel off Route 16 who can build on only half his property because of wetlands.

This fall, Holliston acquired 210 acres, with about \$1 million from a preservation fund and private environmental groups.

Most recently, the mountain biking association secured donations of about \$50,000 from its members to purchase 47 acres at the southwest corner of the triangle.

"One of the reasons we did it is to inspire other groups to say, 'Hey, we can do this, too,'" said Philip Keyes, the association's executive director. "It's a good example of the way the private sector and the nongovernmental sector

can help in preserving some Massachusetts landscapes."

Those involved in the effort agree that the land should be open to the public for passive recreation — hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, showshoeing, horseback riding, rock climbing, trail running — but not to motorized vehicles.

A separate but related effort is the proposed 23- to 26-mile Upper Charles Rail Trail. Eventually, the walking and bicycling trail will partially ring the triangle of open space, running through Milford from the north at the Hopkinton line to the south, looping around Cedar Swamp Pond and turning east into Holliston.

More than 100 people came to a meeting Wednesday on the first phase of constructing Milford's section of the trail, expected to cost more than \$1 million and be complete by June 2006. Reno DeLuzio, chairman of the committee that has been shepherding it for seven years, called it "loosely coupled" with the open-space preservation effort.

"It's a wonderful opportunity for families," said Lori Baranauskas, School Committee chairwoman. "We're very excited to have it in Milford."

'One of the reasons we did it is to inspire other groups to say, "Hey, we can do this, too."'

PHILIP KEYES



Staff photo by DAVID RAINS

The development-busters of the Upper Charles Conservation land trust. From left: Sara Molyneaux of Dover, Anne Rich of Mills, Justine Kent-Uritam, George Fiske of Sherborn and Mike Standley of Medfield.

United they stand ...

By LEAH SAVAGE
Staff Writer

The faces of the members of the Upper Charles Conservation Inc. filled with passion as they recounted the land trust's many accomplishments. Sitting comfortably drinking tea in a parlor-style room, four UCC directors recounted their stories.

Formed in 1992, the UCC is approaching its 10th anniversary and members are proud of its development.

The brainchild of George Fiske of Sherborn and current president John Thomas of Holliston, the UCC filled the gap between local land trusts and much larger land trusts. "The UCC is one of many regional land trusts which are formed to protect water and open space around a river shed," said Fiske.

"We began to discuss the idea with people in surrounding towns, many of which did not have a land trust, some of which did. We had originally wanted to learn about starting a local land trust, but as we spoke to more and more people we found a need to set up something regional," explained Fiske.

One plan, many places

Communities are interconnected from a land management perspective, and the preservation of land in one affects the watershed of many others.

The UCC remained little more than a good idea until opportunity knocked. The chance to get a significant parcel of land in Holliston motivated the founders to establish the UCC.

"A donator needed a donee ... that was the kick off to getting Upper Charles going," Fiske reminisced. The organization is non-profit and tax deductible, an incentive for land owners to donate.

There was a very real need to have representation from surrounding communities and, over time, other communities have joined. The members bring different strengths and areas of knowledge. They collaborate at a monthly meeting.

"Because the group is more regional, the more members of the watershed brought aboard the better," said UCC clerk Sarah Molyneaux of Dover.

The Medfield miracle

Medfield had considered setting up its own land trust. But when they heard of the UCC, they

became the next town to join, according to Mike Standley, the trust's Medfield director.

A memorable accomplishment there came two and a half years ago, when it convinced the town to purchase one of the three most significant pieces of open space.

"The land bordered a country road. It had fields, streams, woods. ... Developers were eager to develop the land to construct 60 houses," said Standley.

Town meeting was in late June, and purchase supporters worried many residents would be away on vacation. The opportunity could be lost. "Once open space is gone ... it's gone," Standley said emphatically.

He wrote letters to 300 people hoping, but not expecting, that enough would turn out for town meeting.

In late June, at 7:30 p.m. a quorum of 250 filled all of the auditorium seats. A half hour later, the meeting had not begun. An official stepped to the podium to explain. The reason for the delay was the throngs of people were still filing into the building, filling up the cafeteria and spilling into the hall. Walkie talkies were set up to let everyone speak.

Standley couldn't believe that so many residents had turned out. And, some time after 8 p.m., he was elated when the crowd issued a unanimous vote to adopt the property.

Later, the UCC learned the 300 residents from all different neighborhoods who received Standley's letter had copied them and forwarded them to neighbors.

Similar to Dover's Wylde woods purchase, Standley's experience illustrates residents' passion to protect their open space.

Battle moves on

Now, the UCC in Sherborn is involved in the purchase 68 acres of open space off Brush Hill Road. Town meeting will be asked this spring to pay up to \$150,000 of the \$300,000 price tag on the Wilson property.

The Sherborn Rural Upper Land Conservation, has generously donated \$60,000 towards the \$150,000 they hope to raise in private funds. To date, they have raised pledges of around \$90,000.

"A huge benefit of the UCC is that we work with local town's to double and triple protect the parcels of land ... this is a major thing we do," said staff member Justine Kent-Uritam.

The UCC is working with the Sherborn Rural Upper Land Conservation and the Sherborn Wetlands and Meadow Protection groups.

"It brings its tax exempt status to the group and allows for donations to be tax deductible," said Kent-Uritam.

Stopping sprawl

Additionally, Medfield and the UCC are contacting land owners in the Upper Charles Watershed to plan and protect the largely undeveloped land around the river. "There is pressure around the 495 belt to build ... it is important to contact landowners about open space and conservation," said Standley.

One way to preserve open space is for owners to donate it as conservation land. Molyneaux had her own Dover farm put under conservation restriction. She said that it is a "good process" and helped with property and inheritance taxes.

Often upon an owner's death, land is divided and heirs pay a steep tax. Many times the property is sold to developers. The UCC works with families to permanently protect their land.

Pedal power

One of the largest projects the UCC is now lobbying for is a 27-mile bike path known as the Upper Charles Trail through Sherborn, Holliston, Milford, Hopkinton and Ashland.

John Thomas UCC president and co-founder, is working on it. The path has received support and funding. Construction is scheduled to begin this summer.

Millis was the fourth town to join, said Anne Rich, UCC treasurer and a town resident. Fortunately, many of the Millis' wetlands are already preserved. The Army Corps of Engineers gave up the idea of damming the Charles River and purchased surrounding land instead, for far less.

"It's wonderful because Millis doesn't have the resources to buy the land," said Rich.

The UCC holds ownership to approximately 253 acres, said Kent-Uritam. Because they are a non-profit organization, much is donated or purchased in collaboration with other groups. The UCC holds an annual fund drive to pay its overhead. They are grateful for any contributions. "We scrape by on very little and depend on public support," said Kent-Uritam.

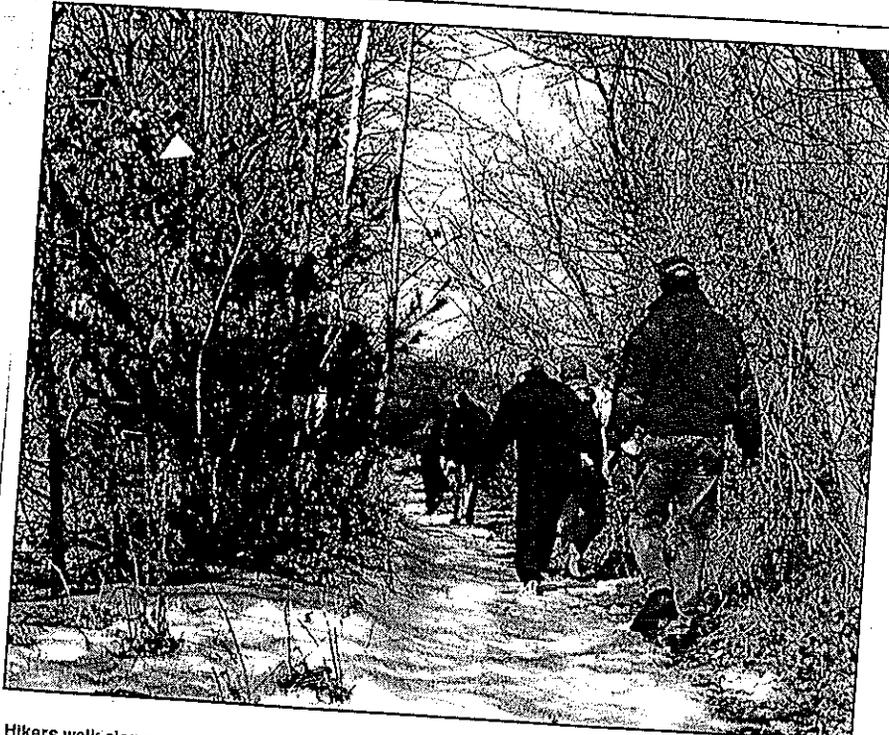


PHOTO BY GREG TURNER

Hikers walk along a pathway on Saturday that may become part of the proposed Upper Charles Trail, a 27-mile path which would pass through six MetroWest towns.

Group hikes proposed rail trail

By Greg Turner
NEWS STAFF WRITER

MILFORD - Trudging through winter's ice pocked with deer tracks, a group of eight area residents Saturday got the lay of the land for the proposed Upper Charles Trail.

MILFORD

"We're going to walk every section of trail and get familiar with it," said Robert Buckley, the Conservation Commission chairman and a member of the Upper Charles Trail Committee. "We're going to come up with the best locations for trails and spur trails."

The committee and a few interested residents hiked for two hours Saturday morning, starting at the Milford Water Company on Dilla Street, passing Cedar Swamp Pond and winding through the town forest.

Along the way they inspected the paths that likely will be a link in a 27-mile trail that would loop through six MetroWest towns. Portions of the trail were overgrown or piled with boulders or abandoned cars. Others were clear cuts through the trees.

The trail would be built on abandoned rail beds through Ashland, Framingham, Hopkinton, Holliston, Milford and Sherborn. The state would pay up to \$9.5 million, with the towns spending \$56,534 yearly for policing and maintenance.

The trail would be used by hikers, bikers, skaters and skiers. The path may be paved, making it handicapped accessible.

Formed in December, the trail committee is trying to gather financial support to develop Milford's section of the trail. The group also has to secure access to the land, some of which is privately owned.

Walking alongside Town Planner Reno DeLuzio and committee member Carolyn Cooney, Holliston resident John Thomas came up with a few ideas during the first leg of the walk, along the west shore of Cedar Swamp Pond.

"We could put a couple of picnic tables up on that rise," said Thomas, president of Upper Charles Conservation, a regional land trust that started the trail project in 1994.

Frank Farello Jr., a civil engineer and member of the trail committee, pointed out a relic of the railroad: a granite post with a W etched in it, which told train engineers to blow their whistles as they approached Dilla Street.

"What I would like to do is open this up so we could see right out to Louisa Lake," Buckley said, standing in a swath of land between the lake and the Cedar Swamp Pond, which is part of the Charles River.

The walkers paused on Clark's Island, a piece of land that juts into the pond and that

has a secondary pumping station for the town's water supply.

Henry Papuga, the Milford Water Co. general manager, suggested a bridge be built across the stretch of water to the park being developed on the old Cedar Street landfill.

"It's a deeper part (of the pond), no weeds, good for bass fishing," Papuga said. "It would be nice for fishing off the bridge."

Scott Peoples, who works in an engineering firm with Thomas and Buckley, peered down at a map of Milford's proposed trails that he helped design.

"I've seen it on paper, but I wanted to come out and see it for real," the Milford resident said.

Debbie Reno came along, too, to inspect the routes she may use for exercise in the future. The Milford resident runs with the Tri-Valley Front Runners, and prefers softer paths to pavement.

"Something like this would be my dream, if it comes through here," she said.

After going back across busy Dilla Street at the Louisa Lake dam, the group turned north into the town forest. There were no signs of human development, save the crumbling foundation of a granite cutting shed, a discarded Dunkin' Donuts cup and the low hum of Rte. 495 to the east.

"This is such an underutilized piece of land, it drives me crazy," Buckley said. "There's a hundred acres here."

Selectmen support Upper Charles rail trail proposal

By Tara Benhardt
TAB Staff Writer
The Sherborn Board of Selectmen voted last week to support the planned conversion of abandoned rail lines connecting Sherborn, Holliston, Milford, Hopkinton, Ashland and Framingham into a hiking and biking trail. The proposed path is called the Upper Charles Trail, as it is nestled in the watershed area of the Charles River.

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council of Massachusetts has determined that the project is feasible.

As it enters the next phase of planning, MAPC has been working with the Sherborn Bicycle Committee to forecast the trail's success in Sherborn, and what kind of long-term financial commitment will be required of the community. Joan Blaustein, project manager of

the council's feasibility study, and Bicycle Committee Chairman Rob Wolff presented their findings to the selectmen at their Sept. 16 meeting.

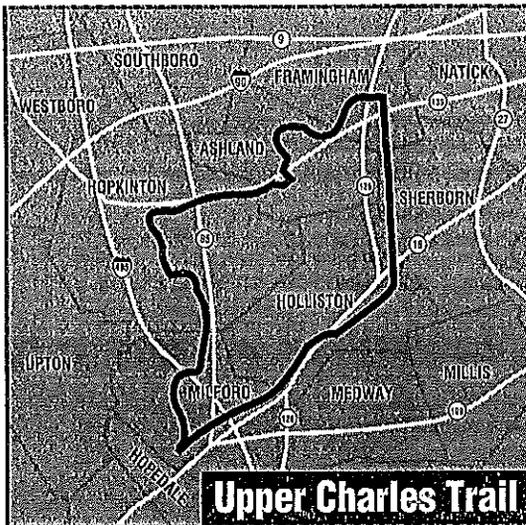
"This trail would be a fantastic recreational resource which would

beds is that when the property is in use, this sort of illicit activity disappears."

Maintenance costs would include keeping the trail clear by trimming vegetation, cleaning up trash and sweeping debris. The cost estimates are based on the length of the Sherborn segment and the money spent by communities on the Minuteman Commuter Bikeway, a popular rail-trail established by MAPC in the greater Lexington area.

Although the plan has the full support of the Bicycle Committee, Wolff and Blaustein both emphasized that there will be multiple uses for the trail, including walking, jogging, in-line skating, cross-country skiing and possibly horseback riding, in addition to bicycling.

Resident Eliot Taylor asked whether snowmobiles would be permitted on the trail. "Only non-motorized vehicles would be allowed on the trail, with the exception of emergency vehicles and motorized wheelchairs," Blaustein replied.



The route of the proposed Upper Charles Trail, which would run through Sherborn and some of its neighbors.

not involve much cost," said Wolff. The Sherborn segment of the trail involves a 1.53-mile portion of the Conrail tracks between Framingham and Holliston, paralleling Western Avenue.

The town's annual financial commitment is estimated at \$3,197, which would cover policing and maintenance costs.

Blaustein pointed out that most towns already police abandoned rail beds. "Abandoned and unused rights-of-way are often locations for illicit activity. What we've seen in cases of converting these rail

Concerning right-of-way issues, Blaustein said the Sherborn, Holliston and Milford segments are less problematic than other portions of the trail. In these towns there are almost no private homes on the tracks. Planners are dealing mostly with large public utilities.

Holliston is furthest along in dealing with Conrail. Holliston resident John Thomas, whom Wolff referred to as the "father" of the Upper Charles Trail plan, attended last week's meeting.

Thomas reported that Holliston residents voted at their spring Town Meeting to authorize the selectmen to enter into negotiations with Conrail. Holliston is currently moving to obtain deeds on a section of the trail from Hopping Brook Road to Cross Street in the southwestern part of Holliston.

Thomas and Blaustein noted the importance of Holliston and Sherborn working together to influence Conrail.

"It's important for each individual community to be inspired by the big picture, in order to make this work," Blaustein said. □

Bicycle committee peddles trail plan to selectmen

By DAN MATHERS
Staff Writer

SHERBORN — A bicycling and walking trail connecting six communities and running partially through Sherborn may be constructed within the next decade.

The Board of Selectmen last week voted to give their support to a plan that would convert abandoned rail lines connecting Framingham, Sherborn, Holliston, Milford, Hopkinton, and Ashland, into a multi-use trail for non-motorized activities. Along with bicycling and walking, the trail, called the Upper Charles Trail, would also be used for in-line skating, cross-country skiing, and possibly horseback riding.

In a letter to the Board of Selectmen, Rob Wolff, Chairman of the Bicycle Committee, said the Sherborn portion of the trail would involve a 1.53 mile portion of the CONRAIL railbed between Framingham and Holliston, which parallels Western Ave.

"This looks like something that would be a fantastic recreational resource," said Wolff.

In his letter to the selectmen, Wolff said the Metropolitan Area Planning Council recently completed a study on the feasi-

bility of converting the abandoned rail lines. The study, which was funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority's Public Works and Tourism grant program, determined that the trail is feasible, added Wolff, and that significant recreational and economic benefits would be obtained by developing the trail.

The trail would provide Sherborn residents with a safe place to bike, said Wolff, which has been a high concern of many people in town.

Plans for the eastern half of the trail, running through Sherborn, Holliston, and Milton, should be non-controversial and move relatively quickly, said Wolff. That half would also be large enough to stand on its own if the Western half had problems and was delayed.

The Western half of the trail, he added, has more land ownership issues and may be more problematic.

Joan Blausteen, a land resources planner for the MAPC, presented the plans for the Upper Charles Trail to the selectmen and said local support was needed from the communities involved in order to get state and federal grant money.

The only cost to the towns involved would be for policing

and maintenance, said Blausteen. The cost to Sherborn is estimated to be \$3,197 per year, the lowest among the six communities.

The trail could help communities, said Blausteen, by providing a place for recreation, transportation, and may help the local economy.

"It could help to stimulate economic development by bringing people into the downtown area," she said.

Blausteen said to have the project completed under five years is highly unlikely. Instead, it will most likely be within the next 6 to 10 years. The project still has a lengthy process ahead of it, she said, and they have no idea what federal funding might be like.

"There's many, many steps that have to happen," she said. "The funding issue is very much up in the air."

Blausteen said she will now make similar presentations to the selectmen from the other communities involved, and then begin looking at funding resources for the design phase of the project.

All the communities involved asked for the study, said Blausteen, and there seems to be a lot of support. It will take a lot of energy and a lot of cooperation among the communities to

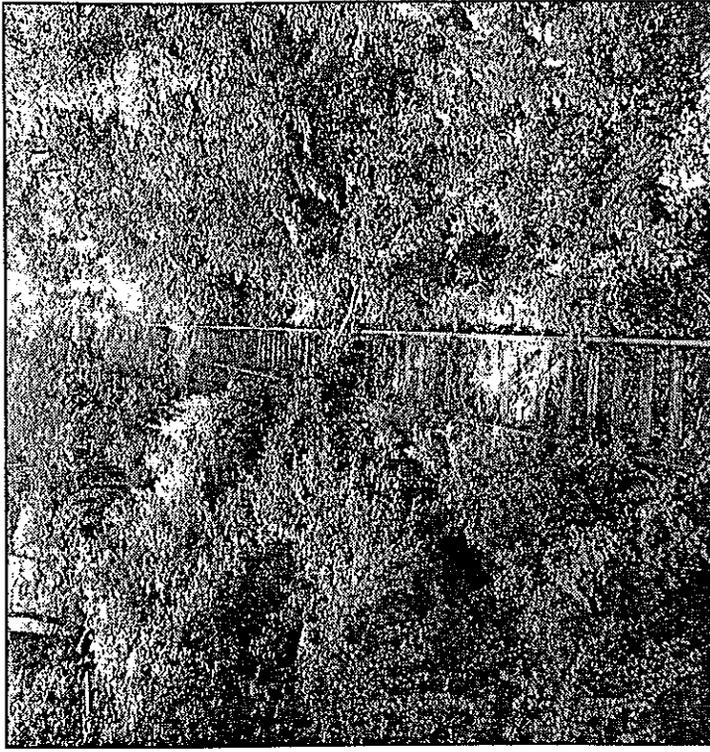
complete the project. "It's not an MAPC project," said Blausteen. "It has to be a community project."

Blausteen added the MAPC would like to see the project keep moving ahead and is willing to

help the communities with the project.

"I think there's a lot of enthusiasm," said Blausteen.

A map of the proposed Upper Charles Trail is set up in the Town Offices.



Staff photo by DAVID RAINS

A view of the tracks under Whitney St. in Sherborn on the Ashland line, which is currently under proposition to become a bike trail.

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February 21, 1997

Hopkinton, Ct

Upper Charles Conservation presents management plan

By Marie Eldridge

HOPKINTON - Residents of Hopkinton, Holliston and Milford are invited to Town Hall on Wednesday, February 26 at 7:30 p.m. for a management plan for the Charles River headwaters will be unveiled. The Upper Charles Conservation, Inc., a regional land trust, developed the plan to help the three towns preserve open space along the Charles River.

According to Justine Kent-Uritam, 2500 acres straddling the towns of Hopkinton, Holliston and Milford impact the headwaters of the Charles River. In addition, the town of Milford depends on it for part of its public water supply.

For nine months Kent-Uritam has been using a \$5000 matching grant from the Boston Foundation to interview approximately 25 affected landowners, local land trusts, Conservation Commissions and other interested parties. She has also walked the sites in question and talked with hikers, rock climbers, dirt bikers, horseback riders and other land users.

While Kent-Uritam didn't confront any unusual problems during her study, she said she was astounded by the number of people using the east side of Rt. 85 - everyone from locals to climbing clubs from Cambridge. She also concluded that Milford, Hopkinton and Holliston shared concerns about their public water supplies.

Next week Kent-Uritam will present a 20-minute slide show and the proposed management plan. That plan includes possible land acquisition, and proposed parking lot sites, hiking and bike trails and standardized hunting laws for the area.

"We have to test drive our ideas with the public," said Kent-Uritam. "We hope people will think the suggestions are reasonable."

The basic goal of the proposed management plan is to direct people away from the west side of Rt. 85 where a public water supply, quarries and a rifle range exist. Instead they will be encouraged to use the open space east of Rt. 85 which includes an extensive trail network. "Obviously we want to limit public access in areas where there are habitats of rare and endangered species and potential archeological sites," said Kent-Uritam.

Most of Hopkinton's portion of the plan impacts College Rock Park on College Street where it would upgrade parking, prohibit hunting, acquire an adjacent land parcel and map and sign trails leading to Rocky Woods in Holliston.

Kent-Uritam and her colleagues hope to develop consensus among private landowners and town boards so the Charles River headwaters area is used for the

greatest public good. "I've never worked with three separate towns and such fragmented ownership before," she said. "We'll listen to comments at the February 26 and modify the plan where appropriate."

Kent-Uritam knows that completing the plan is only half of the equation. "Someone has to implement and fund it," she said. Those funds could come from the

state-funded Open Space Bond Bill which appropriated \$400 million over five years. According to Kent-Uritam, close to \$8 million of that amount is available for direct land acquisition by cities and towns.

The Upper Charles Conservation Inc. is a private, not-for-profit tax-exempt conservation group. Their work in the tri-towns has been funded by The Boston Founda-

tion, the local Conservation Commissions, the Holliston Forest Committee, the Milford Water Company, Beals and Thomas, Inc. and the Charles River Watershed Association.

Seating for the February 26 meeting is limited. If you plan to attend, call Barbara Smith-Mandell at (508) 366-0560 Ext. 30 to reserve a space.

Agreed Johnson: "Oftentimes conservation commissions are so busy with wetland permitting that they don't have time to do long-range planning . . . so there are a lot of opportunities for land trusts just getting started."

Opportunities for establishing local trusts also abound in areas where larger organizations won't tread.

"There are a lot of examples where big land trusts may not be interested in a particular project that comes up locally," Lerner said, "so what you have are attempts by bigger land trusts to spin off local ones."

Upper Charles Conservation Inc. was such a spin-off. Founded in 1992, the group was formed when Avery Dennison Corp., a manufacturing firm with facilities in Framingham and Holliston, offered 110 acres of woodland to the Beverly-based Trustees of Reservations, the world's oldest land trust.

The trustees declined to accept the land, which did not meet its acquisition guidelines, and instead asked Holliston resident John Thomas, president of Beals and Thomas, a Westborough-based environmental consulting firm, if he would launch a local land trust to oversee the property. Today, the Upper Charles group protects an additional 15 acres in Medfield and Holliston, and has several more properties under agreement in Sherborn, in conjunction with the Sherborn Rural Land Foundation. Members of its board of directors hail from Sherborn, Medway, Milford, Holliston and Medfield.

Westborough resident Ellen Lutz, who is heading that town's effort to create a local trust, envisions a group that could play a similar role.

"There are a lot of parcels we would want to save in Westborough that are smaller and isolated," Lutz said. For larger land trusts, "it would be a diversion of resources to pick up little parcels here and there, whereas we might consider that to be money very well spent and land certainly very well preserved," she said. She dismissed suggestions that smaller, younger land banks might siphon money and membership away from larger, more established organizations.

"We take care of our houses and our property, and trusts are an extension of that," said Nadreau, the Ashland resident, who estimates it could take up to a year to get her town's trust off the ground. "It's much cheaper to keep what we have rather than to try to replace it once it's destroyed."

Lutz said: "Land trusts are not just about land acquisition and preservation. They are really vehicles for people to connect to the process of preserving the quality of life in their community."

Land trusts cultivate influence

Local groups join preservation drives

By Sacha Pfeiffer
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Cynthia Nadreau's fight for Ashland's green space began as a small neighborhood skirmish: Local opposition to a 30-unit subdivision slated to be built on 100 wooded acres behind her Concord Street home. But, unlike so many other development battles that begin and end in a single community, this one has assumed larger proportions.

Concerned by the speed at which similarly large housing complexes were cropping up in town, devouring former farmland in the process, Nadreau said, she and several of her Fiske Hill neighbors decided to form a land trust, a long-established but often overlooked tool of the conservation movement that has increased in popularity in recent years.

Land trusts are nonprofit organizations that protect open space by acquiring property or restricting development rights. The costs of starting land trusts are minimal, mainly legal fees to incorporate the group and receive tax-exempt status, but raising funds to purchase real estate can be daunting.

"When things start happening in your back yard, of course you get involved," said Nadreau, 44, a Wellesley native who has lived in Ashland for 11 years. "But then we looked around and saw development everywhere and realized that we needed to do something more."

Land trusts, she added, "offer a way for people who care about open space to get involved," as well as a means to shield local lands from further development.

LAND TRUST, Page 2

Land trusts see growth

■ LAND TRUST

Continued from Page 1

That conservation-minded citizens are working furiously to preserve the fields and forests that remain undeveloped is hardly a recent revelation. What has changed in this continuing struggle between development and preservation is the size and scope of the efforts under way.

At last count, land trusts were being formed at the rate of one per week, according to a 1994 national survey by the Washington-based Land Trust Alliance. The organization states that increasingly diverse cities and towns are now undertaking land banking activities once considered the domain of older, more affluent communities.

Collectively, the nation's 1,100-odd trusts protect some 4 million acres of land, more than a third of which are in New England. In Massachusetts, where roughly 157,000 acres are held by local trusts, Ashland is one of several communities turning to land trusts to preserve and protect fast-disappearing green space.

Efforts to create a trust are also under way in Westborough, where nearly 70 people turned out for a recent planning meeting. And the Stow Conservation Trust, founded in the late 1970s but largely inactive for the past several years, was recently reinvigorated by a \$114,000 state grant to preserve part of an 110-acre orchard.

Many of these younger, smaller trusts lack the clout and bankroll to acquire sizable land holdings. Some of them may never own land at all. But, environmentalists say, they nonetheless play a valuable role by complementing the efforts of regional or national trusts, or by serving as grass-roots advocacy groups.

"There's a need for local land trusts to fill in the gaps, to take on those town common-type issues that, from our standpoint, aren't wildlife habitat or river corridor-type projects, but that are nonetheless very, very valuable," said Stephen Johnson, executive director of the Sudbury Valley Trustees, a regional land bank that oversees the Sudbury-Assabet-Concord river basin.

"We really see a partnership and mentoring relationship with these smaller land trusts, just as we are supported and mentored by [larger land trusts like] Trusts of Reservations and Massachusetts Audubon," he said. "We need a specialist in our communities, and that's the local land trust. We're much stronger when we can partner with these local groups."

Among these newcomers is the Hopkinton Area Land Trust. Established two years ago by town resident David Goldman, the group's president, the trust publishes a newsletter and maintains a library of educational books and videos, but has not yet acquired land.

"It's extremely frustrating, of course," said Goldman, a member of the Hopkinton Planning Board. "It takes one or two pieces of land to crack the egg, so to speak, so we can begin to show that we are an organization that is very, very serious about this."



GLOBE PHOTO / BETHANY VERSOY

Ashland land trust supporters (from left) Cynthia Nadreau, Tobi Hoffmann and Curtiss Hoffman follow deer tracks near their homes.

"Some fledgling land trusts are too preoccupied with getting their first land holding," Johnson said. "It will come, but there's the credibility gap: You have to prove yourself before getting your first land."

Young trusts, like Hopkinton's, can bridge that gap through myriad outreach activities, from raising funds and launching education campaigns to maintaining existing park trails and creating maps and user guides, land advocates say. Trusts also can help communities develop open-space plans or can solicit conservation restrictions, legal methods of restricting development on land.

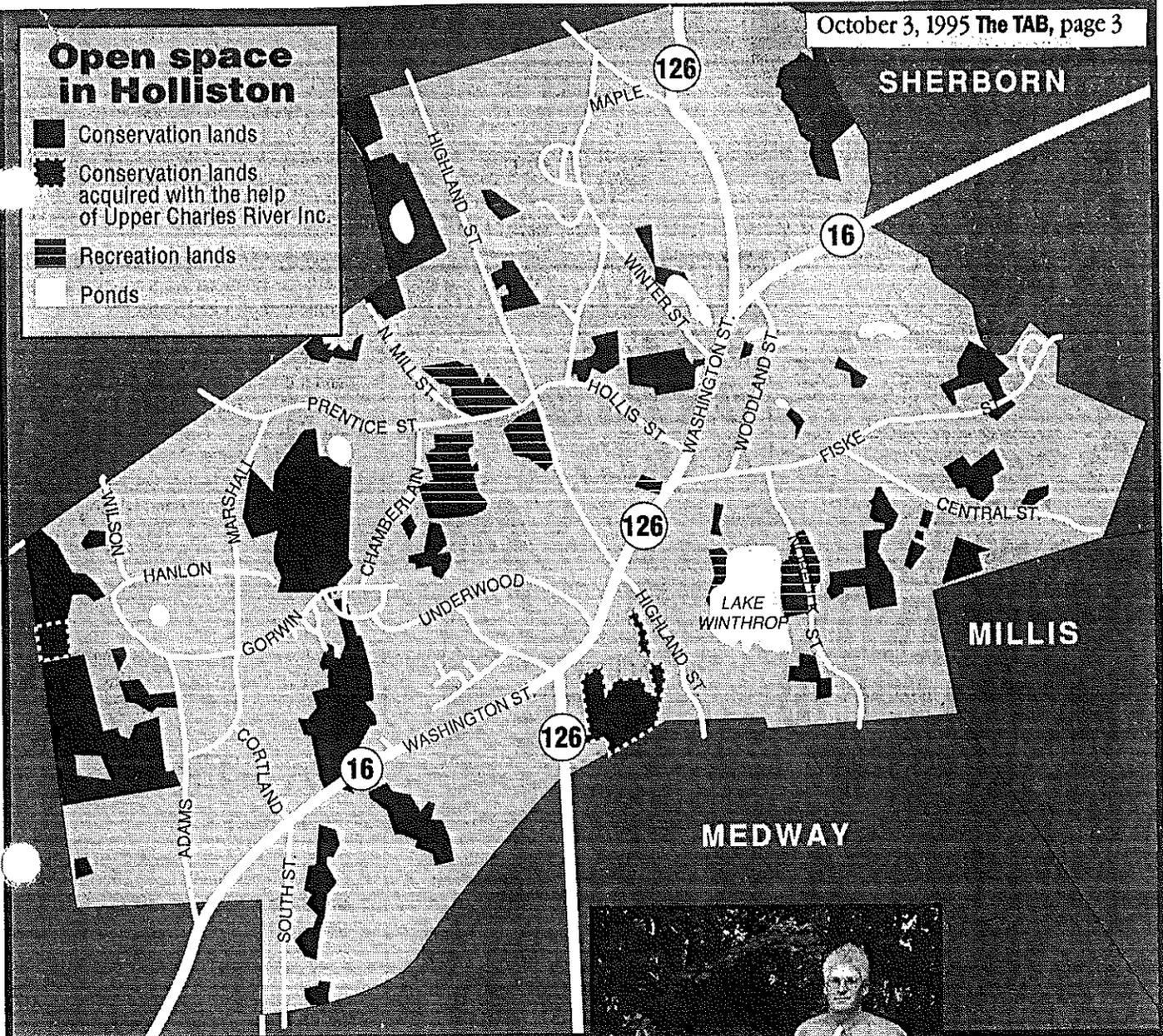
Interest in land trusts also has grown as the growing burden of administering wetlands protection regulations has fallen on local conservation boards, leaving preservation organizations, like trusts, to assume the role of managing and protecting watersheds and other open spaces.

"The growth of the land trusts is directly proportionate to the amount of inactivity of local conservation commissions," said Joel Lerner, director of conservation services for the state Department of Environmental Management.

Cont. Next page

Open space in Holliston

-  Conservation lands
-  Conservation lands acquired with the help of Upper Charles River Inc.
-  Recreation lands
-  Ponds



SOURCE: CONSERVATION COMMISSION

A bit of green space preserved

Land trust, town complete purchase of 20-acre parcel near Rocky Woods

By Heather Aiello
TAB Staff Writer

It's an effort to preserve the identity of the town — the rural neighborhoods, the tranquil lakes, the forests and water supplies.

And the work of Upper Charles River Inc., a local land trust corporation founded by Holliston resident John Thomas, is becoming increasingly evident in town. The purchase of a 20-acre parcel that connects the Town Forest and Rocky Woods was just made final last month. The land is to be used for conservation purposes.

The purchase, approved at annual Town Meeting last May, was a collaboration of forces between the town and Upper Charles River, a

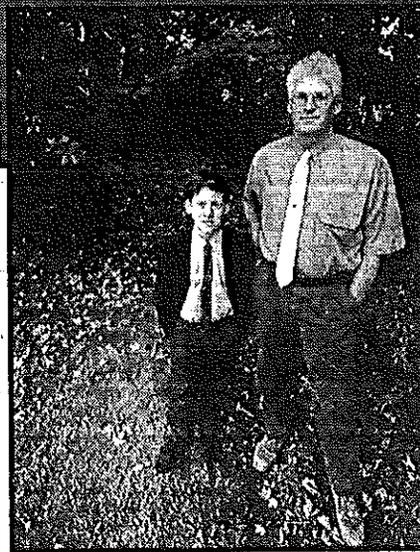


PHOTO BY JOSEPH ACZEL

MAP BY LISA BECKER

John Thomas, founder of Upper Charles River Inc., a local land trust corporation, stands with his son, John Jr., on the site of a recent purchase in Holliston made jointly by the corporation and the town — a 20-acre parcel that connects the Town Forest and Rocky Woods.

nonprofit corporation that aims to protect water resources and preserve land in the 35 towns in the Charles River watershed.

"About one year ago, we went over the Holliston town map," said Justine Kent-Uritam of UCC, as the group is known. "We decided on a parcel of land that made good open space — primarily for linkage between the town forest."

According to the 1993 Open Space and Recreation Plan, there are more than 1,300 acres of land designated for conservation purposes in Holliston.

Thomas, who describes himself as "an advocate for good land use and planning," said he always wanted to devote his time to preserving land in Holliston, but his nine years as a member of the Conservation Commission didn't allow him the time. In 1992 Thomas ended his

see Parcel, page 7

PARCEL

FROM PAGE 3

term and set his passion for land protection to work.

"I enjoy open space and the ability to visit the areas," said Thomas. "It improves the quality of people's lives."

The corporation he founded, which is made up of a six-member board of directors and one part-time staff person, finances itself through land donations by individuals, corporations and governmental agencies. Thomas said that they sometimes sell or lease portions of the acquired land to provide proceeds for a perpetual endowment that can be used to purchase new properties, as well as to maintain those already in existence.

"We are an organization that was designed to take land off the market and preserve it forever," said Uritam.

Thomas said the corporation aims to be regional. He pointed out that it has helped with the purchase of five other pieces of land in surrounding towns.

"Towns need land trusts," said Uritam. "They need someone who cares about how the town is going to grow, the management of resources, and how the town is going to look in years to come."

Last year, UCC was the recipient of Wenakeening Woods — a 120-acre parcel of land at the southern part of town. The land, which was donated to the corporation, now has extensive foot and bike trails.

After the completion of that project, the corporation began to dedicate its time to negotiating with Andover Bank, the owner of the recently purchased land.

"The land could not have been easily developed; there was no frontage and only pedestrian access," said Uritam. "So then we agreed that the land could be bought for \$20,000."

Thomas and Uritam said the price was "in the ballpark" because land that is bought for conservation purposes usually costs from \$1,000 to \$2,000 per acre. Now their job was to find the funds to buy the land.

David Capobianco, chairman of the Conservation Commission, said the commission did not have the money to purchase the land so it was up to the town itself.

"My problem then was how to present it at Town Meeting," said Capobianco. "I spoke for three minutes and there was little opposition."

The Finance Committee recommended the purchase.

"It was generally recognized by the community that more and more space in the town had turned to development," said Town Administrator Paul LeBeau. "The sooner we secure these sights the better."

Capobianco said the idea was "easy to sell" to the voters.

"In terms of tax on the land, it was in pennies," he said.

"This is important to me personally because open space allows wildlife to carry on, and it protects wetlands and water supplies," he added. "People can enjoy the land by hiking, skating. On any given weekend people are around the area."

Although the land is town-owned, it is managed by the Conservation Commission which plans to develop a trail system through the land. Thomas agreed with the idea and said among other things, he wants UCC to be a catalyst for a bikeway from Framingham to Hopkinton.

Supporters of the purchase attest that it is purely an attempt to maintain the town's character and not to entirely stop business and housing developments from coming to town. Uritam said the corporation rarely

attempts to buy land in industrially-zoned areas.

"It's rare, unless the land is inappropriately zoned," she said. "The whole thrust of the land trust is to preserve what is important in nature for humans and wild life. For the humans it's protecting the water supplies.

"Businesses and people don't think of those things," she added. "When we look for land it is not a conscious thing. We look at the underlying map and work backwards from there."

For his part, Thomas said this "side job" is rewarding, especially when he can witness the benefits of open space. Last week, he said, he spotted a group of Boy Scouts coming from the Wenakeening Woods. The feeling, he said, was indescribable.

"To know that I played a part in that was amazing," said Thomas. "The Boy Scouts were able to learn about the woods and I was able to help preserve land people can use." □

12/16/97 middlesex news

Bike trail seeks momentum

Supporters say local money is necessary

By Greg Turner
NEWS STAFF WRITER

Milford resident Robert Buckley someday hopes to hike or bike his way to Hopkinton on a tree-lined trail far from hazardous highways.

"I would like to be able to go up to Hopkinton State Park and make a day of it with my family," the Conservation Commission chairman said.

Buckley is talking about the Upper Charles Trail, a proposed 27-mile recreational path that would loop through six MetroWest towns and cost from \$8.1 million to \$9.5 million.

The plan converts abandoned railroad lines into a trail for bicyclists, hikers, joggers, horseback riders, inline skaters and cross country skiers.

"It really should be called a multi-use path," said Joan Blaustein, a program manager at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, which recently endorsed the plan.

The state would ultimately pay for the trail's design and construction, but the MAPC said the towns would have to pay \$56,534 yearly to police and maintain it. A breakdown of the cost by mileage:

- Ashland, \$7,984 for 3.82 miles
- Framingham, \$5,517 for 2.64 miles
- Holliston, \$14,024 for 6.71 miles
- Hopkinton, \$12,394 for 5.93 miles
- Milford, \$13,418 for 6.42 miles
- Sherborn, \$3,197 for 1.53 miles

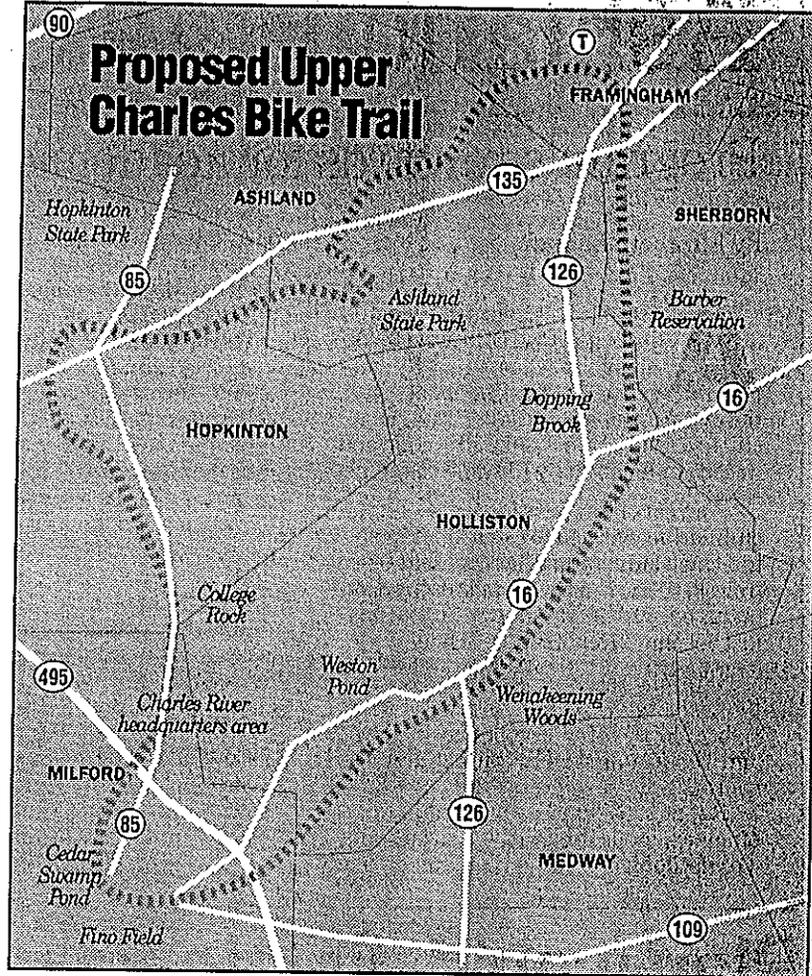
The trail would wind from Framingham's train station, southward through Ashland State Park and Hopkinton's forests, around Milford's Cedar Swamp Pond, northward near Holliston's Dopping Brook and back to Framingham by the Barber Reservation in Sherborn.

In June, the MAPC completed a Feasibility study paid for by a grant from the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority.

The study laid out the components necessary to make the trail a reality. The planning council met with local leaders last week to gauge the project's progress.

According to Blaustein, local support is the key to financing the project. State agencies will not grant money without local governments' endorsements, she said.

"Most projects like these that real-



SOURCE: Upper Charles Conservation Inc.

ing the local work," she said.

The local work, and another hurdle for the planners, is getting access to the land the trail will traverse. Railroad, electric and water companies, towns and individuals own many of the parcels etched with a line on Upper Charles Conservation Inc.'s map.

John Thomas, former Holliston Conservation Commission member, knows it will be a while before the anticipated 2,500 people use the path on a future weekend day.

"The process is very slow," said Thomas, president of Upper Charles Conservation, the regional land trust that approached the MAPC with the idea in 1994. "There's not a clear way to make it happen."

More than 900 trails have been built across the country - and another 1,200 are planned - but residents in Weston nixed their part of the proposed Wayside Rail Trail. At Town Meeting earlier this month, voters concerned about safety and privacy decided not to include Weston in the 23-mile-long path from Belmont to Berlin.

Thomas said, but he believes this region is "ahead of the game."

"I think we now have the momentum in terms of people being behind (the trail project)," he said.

Two towns - Holliston and Sherborn - passed a resolution endorsing the trail. In Milford, selectmen approved a committee of planners to establish the town's stretch of the trail. The board is considering a resolution.

Blaustein said Ashland, Framingham and Hopkinton have "trickier issues" regarding rights of way. Rail beds in Ashland and Framingham are "unidentifiable," while land in Hopkinton is under many different owners, she said.

"The status of some of the lines is questionable," Thomas said, adding that getting easement approvals from owners like Conrail and Massachusetts Electric so far has proved difficult.

The low end of the MAPC's projected cost factors in donated rights of way, something planners from each town will solicit. The plan-

Town seeks open space wetlands

By LEE SEVIG

SHERBORN — About 79 of the 115 acres of property owned by Mike and Susan Humphrey has been offered for sale to the town of Sherborn as open space conservation land.

The Board of Selectmen delayed approval of the property at its meeting Nov. 26 because Selectman Paul DeRensis said he wanted to check on conservation land restriction policies. DeRensis, however, said he supported the Humphreys' offer.

"This is clearly a wonderful idea," he said.

Conservation Commission Chair Art Schnure explained the Humphreys want to keep only 35 acres of that property for their blueberry farm business. He noted that 40 percent of the land the Humphreys are offering Sherborn is wetland.

Schnure said the Humphrey property being one of the least traveled areas in town increases its value.

Town Clerk Susan Adler said that the town buying the conservation land restriction prohibits further subdivision on the land and keeps it open space forever.

Selectman Chair Robert Delaney said he supported conservation land restriction, as the Humphreys were offering. He said the town should be grateful to the Humphreys for such an offer because they could sell the land for private property at a good price.

"Certainly the Humphreys are to be commended," he said.

Conservation Commission member Bill Wise said the area is a wildlife habitat. He said the land was offered through a cooperation between the Sherborn

Rural Land Trust, The Upper Charles Conservation Commission and the town of Sherborn. The land trusts would own the land, but the town would own development rights, he said.

George Fiske, president of the Sherborn Rural Land Foundation Trustees, said the price of the property will be disclosed at the closing of the deal, expected in January 1997. The Conservation Commission paid \$12,500 for the conservation land restriction, he added.

Fiske said the "unusual transaction" with the three groups, which has continued for three years, resulted from the three groups anxiousness for an agreement. He said the land is valuable because it connects with another valuable piece of conservation.

Please turn to page 19

Wetlands —

Continued from page 10
vation land in Sherborn, the Barber Reservation.

Designating the area as conservation land restriction, Wise said, would allow people to walk in that land previously roped off to hikers. He called it the "Northwest Territory of the Town of Sherborn."

Schnure noted that hunting and building would be prohibited in the land and that it would offer a larger opportunity to build hiking trails. He said the land would be identified in Sherborn's open space plan. Access to the property, he said, would be through the Ashland and Framingham side of the land, he said.

Nate Santaphot

in list on Sunday when in Fire House. (Staff



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Warrant Committee supports elderly housing

By JON PAUL POTTS
DOVER — The Warrant Committee checked the recommendations of every member town board and commission last week and voted to support the Heard property elderly affordable housing article at the Oct. 30 Special Town Meeting. The committee voted on the four special Town Meeting articles on Oct. 3 (see story on page 13), supporting unanimously Article 3, which calls for the selectmen to place a development restriction on 5 acres of town-owned wetlands Walpole Street, adjacent to the 2-acre yard property on Centre Street. The restriction would prevent any construction on the land, enabling the proposed elderly housing development to meet Title 5 septic requirements that limit development to four units per acre and within one-half mile from a public water supply. The Dover Water Company has a well on Knollwood Drive.

Please turn to page 13

Area towns work for 20-mile bikeway

By PHILIP MADDOCKS
 In his nine years as a member of the Holliston Conservation Commission, Tom Thomas has stutter-stepped around a share of political obstacles. Those experiences, however, have proved out to be an inadequate primer for the governmental red tape he has faced since last April.

The battle in the pits began when, in his current position as president of Upper Charles Conservation, Inc., a non-profit corporation in Westboro, Thomas began laying the groundwork for a 20-mile bikeway that would take riders through Framingham, Sherborn, Milford, Hopkinton and Ashland in a circular route along an old railway route, linking more than 750 acres, including the urban reservation in Sherborn, and the Woodlands and Dropping Brook Holliston, Cedar Swamp in Milford, and nearly 500 acres in the Charles River watershed area.

The ambitious undertaking — formalized by the MetroWest Bikeway Project — has landed Thomas in the midst of a

A Town Meeting smorgasbord

Dover Special Town Meeting articles sure to draw varied constituencies

By JON PAUL POTTS
DOVER — Elderly housing, playing fields, zoning, the Special Town Meeting on Oct. 30 offers an issue for everyone.

But the question remains, will the Chiokeering School playing fields, sitting as a gravel-strewn eyesore for the last four months, get the same level of support they did at the Special Town Meeting on Oct. 24, 1994, when the project passed by an overwhelming 221-36 majority.

"I certainly hope we get the same level of support we did last year," said Suzie Casper, chair of the Parks and Recreation Commission. "The alternative is, perhaps the dust bowl remain forever, so yes, I think we will have some good support. In addition, the playing fields are needed. There are not enough soccer fields and Little League fields in Dover for all the young families with kids moving into town. I am confident, well, I am very hopeful we will get the same level of support we got last year."

Article 3 calls for a development restriction to be placed on land on Walpole Street adjacent to the Heard



IN THE FADING TWILIGHT, Marissa O'Neil, an eighth-grader from Sherborn, moves in for a goal at a Monday night soccer practice at the Laurel Farm soccer field. Dover has been using Sherborn's soccer fields for years due to a shortage that the Oct. 30 Special Town Meeting may remedy. (Staff photo by J. Klely Jr.)

property. On the face, the article is a simple one, but rejection of the article by every board and committee in town, except for the Warrant Committee has transformed Article 3 into a referendum on elderly affordable housing in Dover.

"We're not going to do anything to get them out," said J. Ford Spalding, co-president of the Dover Community Development Corporation, developers of the project. "We're not going to work the phones, I think people have to go and vote on

the merits of the project. We have done this twice before. We have to hope the project can stand on its own as it did at the two previous Town Meetings."

Town officials would not predict what kind of turnout

Please turn to page 13

Dover mourns loss of 'Ranger Ralph'

By JON PAUL POTTS

DOVER — "Uncle Ralphie's first love was conservation. He trucked through all these woods on foot, and he knew every rock, tree and square of land in this town. We're going to miss the old guy."

These words from Dover Patrolman Kenneth Dunbar may have summarized best what Ralph MacAllester was all about, a man who dedicated his life to the preservation of the woods of Dover for the Boy Scouts he served as a mentor.

MacAllester died last Sunday morning at the MetroWest Medical Center in Natick from complications from a stroke. He was 81 (see obituary, page 14).

Whether rambling over Snow Hill on

the Town House in his big orange van for a Conservation Commission meeting, MacAllester was one of the most recognizable figures in town.

"My first meeting with Ralph was shortly after I moved to town 15 years ago," Selectmen Kristine Scoon said. "I was a Girl Scout leader and Ralph was the ranger. We used to go up and spend the night on Snow Hill and Ralph always managed to accompany us to the camp while giving us nature lessons along the way."

"When we spent the night, we would always truck water up the hill for us," Scoon said. "He frequently spent the night in his camper truck in case we needed him. We couldn't see him, but we always knew he was there to help us if we



Area towns work for 20-mile bikeway

Continued from front page
seemingly no magnetic north with which to orient himself.

"One of my biggest frustrations with this is trying to map out ahead of time I have to go," he said. "I have yet to see any state or government official to tell me what the map is like. It's like one of those complex mazes. You go around and you keep running into dead ends. But you have to travel those before you can get to where you want to go."

The UCC president said that he is still has a good deal of particulars to work out before formally seeking funding for the project. The first priority, he said, is to get the Metropolitan Area Planning Council to complete a feasibility study of the bikeway.

Thomas was scheduled to bring his case to the Metrowest Legislative Caucus at the Statehouse Wednesday morning. With a little governmental tugging, he hopes, the MAPC will decide to make scheduling a feasibility study for the Metrowest Bikeway a priority.

"Back in March and April, when we talked to them, they told us it would be a year before they would get to this," Thomas said.

The feasibility study, said Thomas, is



IF THE METROWEST BIKEWAY through Sherborn, Holliston and surrounding towns comes to fruition, the days of bicyclists battling automobiles on the roadways of Dover and Sherborn may be gone. (Staff photo by Dave Rains)

necessary before UCC can look into any sort of funding help from the state. Where exactly that funding would come from, or how UCC would go about securing it, is something Thomas is still trying to get a complete answer to. The process,

he said, would probably involve the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction and the enhancement funds would come from the Transportation Improvement Program.

What UCC does have at this point is

the support of the towns along the route and many of its citizens.

"I'd say the local response has been outstanding," Thomas said. "I have been involved with a lot of conservation and recreation projects. And with regard to the bikeway project, I have had more calls at home from people who saw on TV or heard somewhere about it and wanted to know, 'What can I do to help?'"

"There are certainly a couple of proposals we want to lend our support to, but that's the one that seems to be most well-organized as a proposal," said Bob Wolff, a member of the Sherborn Bike Committee. "It really looks like it would be a wonderful recreational resource."

The one town that might have reservations about turning the old railway line into a bikeway is Milford, according to Sherborn Board of Selectmen chair and board member Grace Shepard. Shepard said that Milford wants to link up with the commuter rail. One possibility, she said, would be to use the old Conrail line. But that concept has its own problems, according to Shepard, since the Milford Water Company owns some of the line.

One of the benefits of the proposed bikeway, said Thomas, is that it would link present conservation and recreation land that abuts the railway line.

"If people wanted to bike on the bikeway, they could go to Barber Reservation, park their car, and get on their bikes and bike to another reservation," Thomas said.

The bikeway would also allow some people to commute to suburban work locations as well as the commuter rail in Framingham.

As simple as the concept is, it has been greatly complicated by the number of different land owners that have to be drawn into the plan. Much of the proposed Metrowest bikeway runs along land owned by Conrail, Mass Electric and the Milford Water Company. Other land along the route is owned by the state or local conservation commissions.

Thomas said he does not anticipate much opposition to the plan from the various owners. He has already received the endorsement of the towns that would be involved. The utility companies, he said, purchased the land for "right-of-way corridor and utility purposes." He said the bikeway would be compatible with those purposes.

Another hurdle for the UCC plan is that some of the old railway line is termed inactive but has not been formally abandoned. At this point, the line is considered inactive from just south of the General Motors plant in Framingham to Cross Street in Holliston, according to Thomas.

"This is an idea that I have wanted to pursue for a long time, but until recently I really haven't started to move the project forward," said Thomas.

Until he gets a clearer idea exactly what is required, Thomas said he will not know how much longer it will take to bring his bikeway concept into reality. But he did share a

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Three groups put aside 100 acres in Holliston

Park is to be known as Weenakeening Woods

By Susan Speers
SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE

HOLLISTON — More than 100 acres of woodland has been set aside for conservation in Holliston through the efforts of three private organizations with no direct cost to local taxpayers.

The Avery Dennison Corp., a manufacturing firm with facilities in Holliston and Framingham, the Trustees of Reservations, the nation's first nonprofit land trust, and a new land preservation group called Upper Charles Conservation Inc. worked together to create a woodland park that will be called Weenakeening Woods.

The parcel is located between Highland and Summer streets, near the Medway border. Upper Charles will improve existing trails through the property and open it to public use this spring.

John Thomas, president of Upper Charles, said the name for the preserve was chosen to reflect the early white settlers' name for the Native-American village they found in Holliston near Lake Winthrop.

John Rudisill, a project manager for Avery Dennison Corp., said the company decided it no longer needed the land, which is adjacent to its Holliston warehouse. He said that, with industrial land values so low, "the best option was to make a donation."

State law permits landowners to donate land outright or to grant conservation restrictions on land to qualified nonprofit groups or land trusts. By donating land or conservation restrictions, landowners can

Land trust organizations

A number of other local conservation groups and land trusts are active in the West Weekly area, in addition to statewide organizations such as the Trustees of Reservations and the Massachusetts Audubon Society.

Name	Year founded	Acres owned/preserved
Bolton Conservation Trust	1975	300/200
Dover Land Conservation Trust	1965	400/35
Lincoln Land Conservation Trust & Rural Land Foundation of Lincoln	1959/1961	500/300
Metacombet Land Trust (Franklin)	1988	12/12
Newton Conservators	1960	1
Organization for the Assabet River (22 towns in Assabet watershed)	1986	25
Sherborn Rural Land Foundation	1980	85
Sudbury Valley Trustees		
(30 towns in Concord-Sudbury-Assabet watersheds)	1953	1,300/350
Wellesley Conservation Council	1958	40
Weston Forest and Trails Assn.	1955	118/25 plus trails
Weston Land Trust	1991	*

* Currently working to protect 65-acre Case Estates owned by Harvard University
SOURCE: Figures provided by individual land trusts and organizations

Globe staff chart

also of Holliston, is a certified public accountant.

Thomas said that nonprofit land trusts can often act more quickly than towns to preserve land. "A land trust doesn't have to follow the protocols a town would," he said.

Upper Charles will recoup its

costs by selling about 6 acres on Highland Street to provide three house lots. The lots will be sold with conservation restrictions that prevent further development.

Fiske said public access to the land will be provided on both Highland and Summer streets and that some public parking will be included.

Upper Charles members hope to expand the group to include other towns along the western part of the river that do not currently have an active conservation group or land trust.

Fiske said that Upper Charles could include towns such as Hopkinton, Medfield, Medway, and Millis. The initial group of officers live in either Holliston or Sherborn.

"We are trying to help fill" a void," Fiske said.

A group of Medfield residents expects to meet soon with the Upper Charles group. Denise Yurkofsky, a member of Medfield's long-range planning committee, said residents have seen a need for some private mechanism to preserve open space.

This fall, a meeting of all conservation groups working along the Charles will be sponsored by the Charles River Watershed Association of Newton. Anne Blackburn, environmental affairs coordinator, said she hopes that all interested groups will be able to cooperate to protect the remaining undeveloped land along the river.

The lay of the land

Non-profit organization
helping preservation fight

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By Ted McGregor
TAB Staff Writer

DOVER-SHERBORN — If you've got some spare acreage you've been wondering what to do with, there's an organization in the area that aims to gather open spaces and keep woodlands and wetlands intact.

In the past, landowners have bequeathed property to their town or organizations like The Trustees of Reservations, in order to have them kept pristine. Similarly, towns and the TTOR have purchased desirable open spaces to add to their greenbelts.

But the regional Upper Charles Conservation Inc. is a non-profit group that is now putting the final touches on closing on its first property — nearly 100 acres in Holliston.

"The goal is for the public benefit," said UCC President John Thomas, an engineer from Holliston. "It is not to compete with other conservation groups for conservation lands."

The Holliston land — to be called the Weenakeening Woods — was first offered to the TTOR by its corporate owners, Avery Dennison.

When TTOR passed on it, Thomas and George Fiske of Sherborn decided to seize the opportunity.

A "regional niche"

They had been discussing the creation of a regional land corporation for a few years, and with the opportunity in front of them, they went ahead with the idea last summer. Jeff Moore, a CPA, and Harlan Dolinar, an environmental attorney — both of Holliston — are the other two founders of the UCC.

Fiske said he believes the new organization fills a need because there are lands out there beyond the financial means of local towns, and because the TTOR can't buy everything that becomes available since they have a statewide focus.

"The niche is that we're more regional in nature," said Fiske, the former chairman of the Sherborn Conservation Commission.

To finance the purchase, the UCC will sell off three lots from the property for development. The profit from the sales will finance the management of the land and perhaps be used as seed money for the next acquisition.

In this way, a small area of development

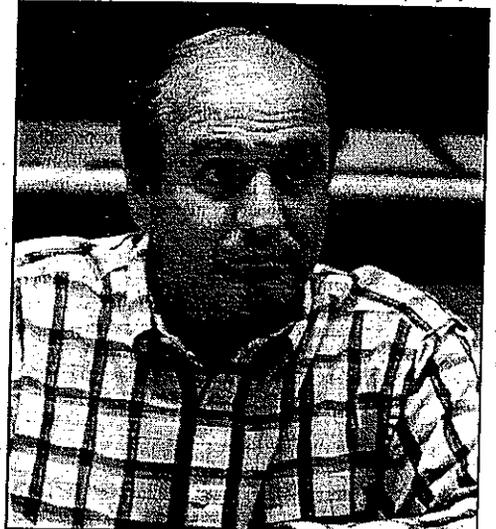


PHOTO BY OTA RICHTER

George Fiske of Sherborn: "You can have a nice balance between preservation and well thought out development."

is traded for a large, permanent preserve, Fiske said. There were plans circulating to significantly develop the land, Thomas noted.

The UCC plans to maintain trails in the Weenakeening Woods and perhaps install interpretive exhibits. The area is located between Highland and Summer Street and extends to the Medway town line. The name was chosen because it was the Native American name for nearby Lake Winthrop.

UCC could seek donations

Thomas said future acquisitions may or may not take the same form as the current one, in which some of the land is sold to finance the deal.

"They're all going to be different," he said.

The San Francisco-based Avery Dennison — which operates a distribution plant adjacent to the 100 acres — sought the deal because there was surplus land and because they have a corporate predilection toward conservation, Thomas said. The company will also receive a tax benefit through the deal.

Although no fund-raising plans are in the works now, Fiske said that someday the UCC may seek tax-deductible donations to the cause from area conservationists. A principal fund would be needed in order for the UCC to purchase properties outright.

The UCC is interested in land throughout the Upper Charles River Basin, and will pursue private owners as well as corporate ones.

"We're interested in land, it doesn't matter who owns it," Fiske said. □