

## Open Space Committee – 2014 Annual Report

The Open Space Committee (OSC) was formed by the Select Board in 2004 in response to the 2003 Master Plan recommendation that reflected townspeople's support for land conservation as a key component of wise town planning.

Identifying land with the highest conservation value is part of the Committee's charge, as well as outreach to owners to explain why their land is so important, and how conservation can be a viable option to protect that value.

The story of Peterborough's most recent addition to protected open space is a good example of that process.

Hiroshi Hayashi's 103 acres (plus six in Harrisville) lie between Route 137 and Nubanusit Brook in the NW corner of Peterborough. It scored high on the town's ranking for natural resources (conservation value).

Hiroshi, known to many as the chef of Latacarta Restaurant, had a deep connection to his land and a strong desire to conserve it. He walked the land with Open Space Committee members in 2009, options were discussed, and the Harris Center land trust in Hancock was brought into an ongoing conversation.

We didn't succeed back then, but efforts continued and when Hiroshi died in 2012 his family honored his wishes that the land remain intact, not subdivided.

Search for what's called a "conservation buyer" began—a buyer who would place a conservation easement on the land that limits future development, thus maintaining its natural resource values. The Harris Center became that buyer after a fundraising campaign that included a \$50,000 grant from Peterborough's Land Acquisition Capital Reserve Fund.

Reasons the Hayashi land scored high for conservation—thereby meeting criteria for spending the town's conservation funds—include its size, greatly enhanced by linkage with Sargent Center and MacDowell Dam trails and open space, as well a block of conserved land to the east along Windy Row.

The land also has considerable wetland and shoreland (frontage on the Nubanusit Brook corridor), and forest resources. As confirmation of its wildlife value, the state's Wildlife Action Plan gives the majority of the property its highest ranking (Tier 1). And not just wildlife roam the land. Old farm trails were cleared and are now open to the public, including access across the Nubanusit (by cable bridge or pull-along skiff) to Sargent Center trails.

There are many other compelling stories of how land has been conserved in town over the years—by families, neighbors, the town, and groups like the Harris Center.

As 2014 closed, the OSC began a project to tell those stories on the Committee's site on the town's web pages. Please stay tuned.

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