

Open Space Committee Annual Report 2006

The Open Space Committee (OSC) is charged with implementing the Open Space Plan presented in the town's Master Plan blueprint that calls for locating future development in existing "village" areas and conserving the outlying areas.

Committee work in 2006 centered on outreach:

- To Town Meeting which, with the unanimous support of the Budget Committee and Selectmen, approved \$75,000 for the Land Acquisition Capital Reserve Fund. While many towns pass large land conservation bonds, the OSC has recommended the annually incremental capital reserve approach – with strong, consistent support from Town Meeting vote.

- To owners of land with demonstrated natural resource value to communicate the many conservation options and town funding available to support those options. The U.S. Congress, recognizing the value of land conservation, recently approved significant tax incentives for landowners placing their land in conservation. A letter from the OSC went out at the end of the year notifying landowners of this incentive which sunsets at the end of this year. There also have been meetings with individual landowners.

- To townspeople, to communicate the importance and benefits of land conservation. The committee's *Open Spaces, People & Places 2006* calendar highlighted one conservation land each month with photos and a brief narrative about the people with foresight and strong land ethic who conserved the land (neighbors; landowners; the town, by voter support); a monthly "Last Saturday" series of hikes brought townspeople out to explore those lands; and a photo show in the Town House (ongoing) further features town conservation lands.

With an elderly land-owning generation, land is changing hands rapidly. The OSC helped find a conservation buyer for one significant property in town, and the town's conservation fund is available to cover the survey, appraisal and legal expenses involved in placing that land under permanent conservation easement. OSC encourages owners of land with significant wetland/shoreland, farm/forest, wildlife, historic or scenic values to contact the committee about a variety of conservation options and town funding that supports those options.

Committee members attended workshops on topics including land stewardship, leading interpretive field trips, implementing the state's new Wildlife Action Plan, and land conservation tax benefits. They are members of the steering committee in support of state purchase of Temple Mountain for addition to the state park system.

The OSC meets the second Thursday of each month in the Town House and welcomes townspeople participation.

Alan Bannister

David Cheney, alternate

Ed Henault, chair

Debby Kaiser, vice chair

Leandra MacDonald

Liz Thomas

Francie Von Mertens

Alex Walker

Mark Harrison, Budget Committee
representative