

## Open Space Committee Annual Report 2008

The Open Space Committee (OSC) continues outreach efforts to landowners and townspeople with one primary goal: that owners of land high in natural resource value give thoughtful consideration to conservation. The OSC is available to talk with landowners about the many forms of land conservation, as well as funding support.

2008 was an exceptional year for land conservation in Peterborough as three families placed their land under permanent deeded conservation easement. Under conservation easement, the properties remain privately owned but with restrictions on future development. All three properties had high conservation value following a natural resource ranking system set forth in the town's Master Plan.

The Williams/Greene family conserved 239 acres of farm and forest land on Windy Row near the Hancock line; out Old Town Farm Road, Debby Strong Kaiser and her husband Karl conserved 49 acres of wetland and forest land in Peterborough and across the line in Jaffrey; and the Liz and Steve Thomas family conserved 375 acres plus an adjoining 53 acres across the Greenfield town line in the East Mountain/Sand Hill Road area.

All three properties are in the town's outlying rural areas. They also link with other conserved lands, thereby scoring for "linkage," a significant natural resource value. Simply put, in land conservation bigger is better, and if a property links with other conserved land it helps create an unfragmented block as compared to an isolated island. Size protects the resource – including wildlife, water, farm, forest, scenic – against disturbance.

Small parcels near town centers have significant value for neighborhood trails and parks.

Town funding is available in support of the town's land conservation goals as clearly stated in Peterborough's Master Plan. Town Meeting voters in 2008 approved a \$25,000 addition to the Land Acquisition Capital Reserve Fund – the amount estimated for the year's land conservation initiatives, and very close to the actual amount spent. The funding covered landowner costs of putting land in permanent deeded conservation. Surveys, covering a land trust's expenses, legal... these costs can mount up.

Other projects in 2008 included the second *Open Spaces, People & Places* calendar that featured 12 of the town's conservation lands and stories of how they came to be conserved. As stated above, there are many forms of land conservation.

The committee worked with the Conservation Commission to iron out funding protocol and communication issues, and thanks ConCom member Dave Enos for agreeing to serve as liaison to the OSC to assist that process.

OSC offered walks in partnership with the Recreation Committee on town conservation land; members attended land conservation workshops and gave a few; wrote town newsletter and Ledger-Transcript articles; and assisted the Conservation Commission in monitoring conservation easements held by the town. When families like the Greens, Kaisers and Thomases place land under deeded conservation easement, the easement deed must be held by a land trust or conservation commission that monitors the land to ensure the development restrictions are honored.

A project to add land to Shieling State Forest remains in process, as does finding a conservation buyer for land across from the town beach at Cunningham. The OSC found conservation buyers for two properties in town in the past. A conservation buyer is one who typically builds one house but conserves the remaining acreage.

Townspople involvement is essential to land conservation, whether it's helping take care of town conservation land in your neighborhood; thanking landowners for the benefits their open land provides us all; donating to a land protection project; joining a town committee and working towards wise land use planning; joining with neighbors to conserve land in your neighborhood.

The OSC meets the second Thursday each month, 7 p.m. in the Town House, and welcomes townspeople attendance.

Alan Bannister

Ed Henault, Chair

David Cheney, Alternate

David Enos, Conservation Commission liaison

Debby Kaiser, Vice chair

Liz Thomas

Eric Thum

Francie Von Mertens, Secretary

Alex Walker