

Open Space Committee Annual Report 2007

The Open Space Committee (OSC) is charged with implementing land conservation goals stated in the Peterborough Master Plan's Open Space Chapter. Those goals center on conserving land with high natural resource value (including water, forest and farm resources; wildlife habitat; scenic value).

In 2007 the OSC found conservation buyers for two properties in town that have significant farm soils, wetlands and shoreland, and that link with other conserved land to further add conservation value by expanding an existing conserved block of land. Conservation buyers place permanent deeded development restrictions called "conservation easements" on the land.

With support from the Budget Committee and Selectboard, the OSC successfully presented Town Meeting with a warrant article to add \$75,000 to the town's Land Acquisition Capital Reserve Fund. While many towns pass large land conservation bonds, the OSC has recommended the incremental annual capital reserve approach – with strong, consistent support from Town Meeting vote.

Selectmen and Conservation Commission approved \$20,000 from that fund as the town's contribution to the conservation of Temple Mountain as a state reservation, a project successfully completed in December and one that OSC members have worked on for years. The fund also contributed \$7,000 towards a conservation easement deed protecting 104 acres along Old Town Farm Road near the Jaffrey town line.

The OSC's 2008 calendar *Open Spaces, People & Places – Peterborough* featured 12 of the town's conservation lands, with many photos and stories of the land, as well as nature almanac entries. The OSC produces the calendar to highlight the many benefits of conserved land and the many ways that landowners, neighbors and other townspeople, and town committees, have worked to conserve land.

As part of its outreach to owners of land with exceptional natural resource value, the OSC sent letters outlining new federal tax incentives for land conservation. OSC also sent complimentary *Open Spaces* calendars to these landowners, pointing out examples of land that was conserved because the owners gave the town head notice of their intention to sell – thereby giving conservation a chance. It is the Committee's firm belief that conservation can be achieved that meets the landowners' needs, but all too often conservation is not considered a workable option.

OSC members attended workshops on topics including tax incentives, land stewardship, and conservation funding, and co-led a hike with the Harris Center to explore land on Windy Row soon to be conserved by the Greene family

On the land stewardship front, OSC members assisted the Conservation Commission in the annual monitoring of conservation easement properties to ensure that development restrictions are being honored; and researched the matter of dog litter on town trails with resulting signs that will be put in place come spring thaw stating that NH law requires owners to pick up after their dogs when not on their home territory.

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

Alan Bannister
Ed Henault, Chair
David Cheney, Alternate
Debby Kaiser, Vice chair
Leandra MacDonald

Liz Thomas
Eric Thum
Francie Von Mertens
Alex Walker