



Londonderry Trailways Newsletter

Our Mission:

- Develop trails to connect neighborhoods, schools, businesses and local points of interest, in order to encourage a greater sense of community.
- To promote safe cycling by educating residents, businesses and local government on the advantages of non motorized forms of transportation.

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Winter 2001/2002

LT's Year in Review

By Sandy Lagueux

Happy New Year to all!

It has been a very successful year for Londonderry Trailways and I wanted to take a moment to thank everyone. Whether you support the club through membership dues or through dues and volunteering, your involvement is critical to our success. Our membership has grown to over 65 households representing more than 100 voting adults, (and we do not even actively recruit members). This growing membership number is important. When we go in front of our town's Planning Board, Town Council or Conservation Commission advocating for improvements to walking, hiking and cycling in the woodlands or around town, we surprise them with how high our membership numbers are.

It's important to keep in mind that Trailways works on two distinct types of projects—woodland recreation trails and alternative transportation pathways around town. So, what have we done in the last year?

Woodland recreation trails

During 2001 we submitted the application, were awarded and began the trail work on our first ever grant, for KPCA. The remaining work will be completed in spring 2002, (see related story, page 2). During 2001 we also continued to take care of the Musquash, by producing the first GPS trail map for club members, doing ongoing trail maintenance and developing an all important master list of future items that need to be fixed or improved. Since the Musquash is 700 acres with already 6-8 miles of trails, it will remain an ongoing project for our club to be stewards of this land and take care of these trails.

Alternative transportation pathways around town

These are longer term, more complicated projects because they involve roads, engineering standards, design criteria, drainage issues, rights of way and a much higher cost than anything we work on in the woods. During 2001 we presented a Bike/Walk Master Plan that shows the long-term wish list of all the major roads in town that need pedestrian and/or bicycle improvements. The Planning Board unanimously voted to endorse this Master Plan in May 2001. The Planning Board went on to upgrade their regulations which now require any newly proposed development, on the Master Plan designated roadways, to have pedestrian accommodations (pathways or shoulder or sidewalks of some type).

Trailways is also now part of the Design Review Committee where we see proposed development plans at their earliest stages and can give direct input on them. That is great news for pedestrians affected by future development, but what do we do about all the existing areas that are already developed and need pedestrian improvements? We write grants to fund the retrofitting/upgrading of such areas. During 2001 we submitted a grant application in partnership with the Town of Londonderry to build a proposed pathway that connects the front of all four centrally located schools, to each other, and connects them to the two large adjacent neighborhoods, (see related story in the fall newsletter for details). This grant application will be decided on this summer, but unfortunately it takes another few years to get the actual money...see what I mean about longer term projects! After having gone through this more complex state/federal grant process once, now we will be in a better position to submit a grant application each time they become available, (every two years) in order to continue to upgrade other areas in town that residents deem are a priority on the Bike/Walk Master Plan. (In case you were wondering, once completed, these "alternative transportation" pathways will be used by citizens to get from point A to point B and also for pure recreation.) Imagine runners having a safe place to run and parents having a safe place to walk with baby joggers as well as kids riding their bikes to school or to ball practice!

And lastly, there are a lot of other indirect or internal club activities that were accomplished in 2001. We achieved non-profit status, we began sending out welcome packets to new members, we began upgrading our website to its next generation, we upgraded our membership database to handle more members and renewals, we participated in both the parade and booth displays at Old Home Days and we raffled off two bicycles.

Wow, it's been a big year. Let's all thank each other for such a successful year.

Kendall Pond Trail Work Completed

By Dani-Jean Stuart

Sixty-two people arrived early Saturday morning, October 20th, to lend a hand at a Trail Day for Kendall Pond Conservation Area. The event was successfully organized by Marilyn De Luca, Trailways' Recreational Trails Chair. Londonderry Trailways members along with local Girl Scout troops and a Cub Scout Pack pitched in to finish the trail work at Kendall Pond Conservation

Area. The completion of the work is the first part of a successful grant project for \$5250.00 awarded to Londonderry Trailways by the New Hampshire Bureau of Trails. The trail work took several stages to complete. The first stage was having the trails graded by a small piece of earth clearing equipment to remove stumps and large rocks from the trail bed. The trails were then groomed by a Trailways member using a tractor and a york rake. The Trailways group used some grant funds to buy grooming tools for the heavy manual labor involved in the next stage of the trail work. Two trail grooming teams swung the pick mattocks that were used to cut out roots and stubs and remove rocks that were left after the grading and york raking, while a trail blazing team marked the two trails that will match a future map. This work has created more trail access in the Kendall Pond area and has made the existing trails more walkable. Londonderry Trailways president, Sandra Lagueux, says, "This is a wonderful, family oriented area. With the final grading and grooming of trails, they are now wider and easier to walk on. It's a great place for a family with small children who are just learning to ride a bicycle, for people with dogs, and this winter the area can be easily accessed for snowshoeing and cross-country skiing." Girl Scout Junior Troop 2382, Girl Scout Brownie Troop 752, Girl Scout Cadette Troop 370 and Cub Scout Pack 521 and their adult supervisors were among the volunteers. The Scouts helped create some revegetation areas, cleared a small scenic area of brush and took on the chore of picking up trash, as well. Improvements to the parking area will be the final step in the grant project and will likely be completed next spring.

Winter Event at the Musquash

The Londonderry Conservation Commission's Annual Musquash Field Day is scheduled for Saturday, February 2, 2002. There will be sled rides and, we hope, an opportunity to try snowshoes or x-c skis. There's always a bonfire to cook hot dogs and marshmallows. Come out and enjoy some winter fun!

Notes from the Conservation Commission

LT member Deb Lievens is also the chairperson of Londonderry's Conservation Commission. She tells us they have a need for new members. Two people retired this year and so far no one has stepped up to actually sign up for a slot. Deb said, "I would recommend that any individuals come to visit a meeting to see what we do and if they are interested they should sign up as an alternate which is a one year position." Deb describes the duties of the Conservation Commission as including the following tasks. "Our paperwork review includes going over Dredge and Fill applications for the state as well as reviewing Conditional Use applications for encroachment on the Town wetlands buffer. We also look at all plans for the Design Review Process. Some of these reviews also require a site visit. We also manage the Town's conservation lands and are actively involved in the open space protection program." She invites any of LT's members who might be interested in the Conservation Commission to come for a visit. This is a good opportunity for a LT member (or two) since we

share many common goals with the Conservation Commission. The Conservation Commission meets the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at the Town Hall's Northgate Conference room at 7:30.

Posting the Musquash

If you've been to the Musquash recently, you may have noticed some new "No Motorized Wheeled Vehicles" signs at the entrance. These postings announce the town ordinance against motorized wheeled vehicles being used in the Musquash. The posting allows the law enforcement organizations (Londonderry Police, NH Fish & Game) to enforce the ordinance more actively. Sometimes it seems like the signs are taken down as fast as they are put up. LT members have reported a few conversations with ATV riders and motorcyclists—there were a wide variety of reactions. What has become obvious is that there is a general non-awareness of the ordinance.

Where Can ATVers Go if Not the Musquash?

What do you tell someone when he or she asks, "Since I can't ride my ATV or motorcycle in the Musquash, where can I go?" Now we have an answer: tell them to check out the following website:

www.new-england-rail-trails.org

Several advertisements will pop up and some automatic re-routing will take place. Once you get passed all of that, scroll down from the main screen to see the New England states listed. Click on one of the states and you will get a list of abandoned rail beds that can be used for a number of outdoor activities. In addition to many that allow hiking biking, X-country skiing, snow shoeing, and horseback riding, a few also allow motorcycles and ATV's.

Another website with even more information about where ATVers and motorcyclists can go is shown below:

www.nhparks.state.nh.us/trails/atv.html

Prominently placed on the web page is the answer to (according to the website) the most asked question, "Where can I ride?" Just below the question are some current maps showing ATV riding areas with links to other websites for further information.

Is Open Space a Priority?

By Mike Speltz

Take a mental ride down route 102, through Londonderry. As you wait for the long light at Gilcreast Road, imagine what it will be like after the new supermarket and the new apartment complex are complete. Advance—patiently—a few more lights to the pile of loam that will no longer be needed under the acres of parking at the new Home Depot. Wait for a couple of light cycles at Mammoth Road.

Leaving the two drug stores in the rear view mirror, you see the old sawmill on your left. It has been there for about a century and probably always will be, right? Then on your right, just before the power lines, lie the woods surrounding Lythia Springs. When the sawmill was young, people shipped water from that spring to New York and even to Europe. The property has been on and off the market, so no one is likely to buy it, right?

Arriving home you check the mail and open your bank or mortgage statement. The property tax shows up on it. It kind of takes your breath away. Well, how have you enjoyed the ride so far?

Our land is being developed, because it is valuable. The owners have provided us all with open space amenities. Now they need to provide for themselves and their children.

Our taxes are high, because we have so much more residential real estate than we do industrial or commercial. Residential lots ultimately mean children in school. According to the town website, Londonderry has 7,923 households and over 5300 pupils or 0.67 pupils per household. Even if the average home were assessed at a pricey \$200,000, each household "contributed", on average, only \$2,390. The state recycled back to us another \$8.9 million or \$1,130 per household through the state property tax. Yet the per-pupil cost is about \$6000, so the average household received \$4,000 in educational services! The difference of nearly \$500 per household comes mainly from commercial and industrial taxpayers and from open space, none of which send kids to school. The bottom line: each new residence costs the school district \$1.14 for every \$1.00 it pays in taxes.

We have two choices. We could re-zone residential land to commercial land: how would that affect our imaginary ride down route 102? Or, we can keep residential land in open space. Like commercial and industrial property, open space demands less in town services than it pays in taxes.

Open space means cleaner air and water, not only by keeping sources of pollution out, but also by directly removing pollutants. Open space means a place to hike or ski or picnic close to home. Open space means living with orchards, fields, forests and ponds, rather than strip malls, apartment complexes and megastores.

The Londonderry Open Space Task Force, in its report to the Town Council, recommended protection of 76 undeveloped parcels totaling 3,285 acres—about 12% of the land in Londonderry. These parcels and adjoining large residential lots create an ecologically viable network of natural areas around Londonderry. Natural areas would surround our neighborhoods rather than isolating our natural areas as museum pieces. Such "islands" are not sustainable.

The assessed value of this land is \$15.4 million dollars, roughly the amount of money we now need to spend on an addition to the high school and on a police station. Grants from various sources will reduce the amount we must raise locally, but the price tag could easily exceed \$10 million. In less than five years the educational costs avoided from these potential residences will exceed the bond payments made.

We build homes, we raise taxes to pay for services to the homes and we delay taking decisive action to preserve open space "until we can afford it." Meanwhile, we keep building and taxing and guaranteeing that we will never be able to afford it.

Despite this discouraging pattern, over the last two years, the town has budgeted \$700,000 to acquire open space. Today's taxpayers are paying full price for open space assets that will benefit every single person that will ever live in Londonderry. Shouldn't these folks help out?

If we had floated a \$6 million dollar bond two years ago, we could have made the payments with that same \$700,000 and acquired much of the planned open space at prices less than we must pay today.

On December 20th the Londonderry Town Council considered a small open space bond article. The counselors are trying desperately to keep the tax bill for next year from increasing. They also realize that open space is key to keeping *future* tax bills from increasing and to maintaining our quality of life. They need input from the public they serve. Is it time to break the cycle of build-tax-delay? Can we continue to sustain the same commitment of \$350 thousand annually in the form of a \$6 million bond? Can we do more? Is open space a priority?

[Editor's Note: Mike Speltz is a member of Londonderry Trailways, Londonderry's Conservation Commission, and the Conservation Commission's Open Space Task Force]

Musquash's Good Neighbors

By Bob Hettmansperger

On October 21, 2001 I planned to hike the Betty Mack loop trail in the Musquash Conservation Area with my family (wife, 3 1/2 year-old son and infant daughter). Based on the new map from Londonderry Trailways, we decided to try the trailhead on Sara Beth Lane. Since we had never started from that trailhead, it took us awhile to drive around and find the sign for the Conservation Area, but eventually we found it and parked right under the power lines and began unloading the gear for our hike. We were the only car there. As we were loading our daughter into the back carrier and reminding our son to stay close to the car and out of the road, a resident of one of the houses approached us on the street. Expecting some sort of problem regarding private property access, we were pleasantly surprised by his friendly greeting. He explained that he lived at the end of the cull-de-sac and saw us getting ready to go hiking with the kids, and he wanted to make sure we were aware that bow hunting season had already started and that we should make sure to wear high visibility clothes. When we said that we hadn't brought any with us, he immediately offered us some of his own orange vests. "Feel free to use them, and just leave them in our mailbox when you're finished" he said. He also mentioned that he sees hunters coming and going from that trailhead all the time. We graciously took him up on his offer, and went on to have a great hike amid the fall colors of the Musquash. Thanks to all the friendly people out there who are looking out for the safety of hikers during hunting season.

Proposed Musquash Improvements

By Sandy Lagueux

Londonderry Trailways will be submitting it's second grant application to the NH Bureau of Trails, Recreational Trails Program. In January of 2001 we submitted a grant application for our Kendall Pond Conservation Area improvement project. In the spring we were informed that we were chosen and by the summer our work began.

(See related article on page 2 for an update.) In January of 2002 we will be submitting a grant application for our Musquash Conservation Area improvement project. This application will request funding for three areas of need in the 700 acre Musquash that already has 6-8 miles of trails. The first need is for signage. Entrance/trailhead signage is needed as well as many smaller signs throughout the trail system. With this grant we will request the funds for the entrance/trailhead and for the Betty Mack and Overlook trails. The second need is for a professionally printed trail system map. The Musquash is under-utilized by folks in town mostly due to the lack of familiarity with the trails. Trailways member Peter Desantis used the GPS (global positioning system) to create a draft map of the Musquash, which has been sent to all Trailways members. With this grant we hope to improve the map graphics and then mass-produce the maps to donate to the town. The third need is for bridges or boardwalks over wet trail areas. There are many spots along the existing 6-8 miles of trails that are in need of either rerouting away from wet areas or bridging. This grant application will start with proposing bridges or boardwalks for four of these spots. As always this grant application will require the commitment of at least a 20% local match, which can be provided in volunteer hours, donated supplies or actual dollars. For example if the total cost of a project is \$10,000 then we would need to commit to \$2,000 in match contributions and if chosen, the grant would supply the remaining \$8,000. Now you can see why our volunteer trail days are so important!

Londonderry Trivia (sort of...)

What does "Musquash" mean?

Find the answer at the end of the newsletter.

Non-Profit Status (Finally!)

After months of wrestling with forms and phone calls, both the State of New Hampshire and the Internal Revenue Service have finally recognized Londonderry Trailways as a non-profit organization. We received final notification from the IRS in mid December. Our non-profit status is retroactive to June 15, 2001, the date we started the application process. This is good news since our new status opens several opportunities for grants available only to non-profit organizations.

EMS Rental Gift Certificates

LT member, Kirsten Hildonen, is the assistant manager of the Manchester Eastern Mountain Sport (EMS) store. For each of the last three months, she has graciously arranged to have EMS donate a gift certificate for \$50 for the club to use as it sees fit. The certificate is good towards the rental of any equipment in their rental program (snow shoes, x-c skis, tents, backpacks, etc.). It can be redeemed at any EMS store (however the Peterborough and West Lebanon stores are the only ones that have cross country ski rentals). So far, we've randomly chosen to "draw names from the hat" (or, in the case of the December monthly meeting, from a bicycle

helmet) of people attending various LT events. The winners of certificates are listed.

- October's certificate was given away at the very successful Kendall Pond Volunteer Trail Day. Everyone who volunteered that day had his or her name in the hat. The winner was – Mike Long.
- November's certificate was given away at the December monthly meeting. Everyone that attended that monthly meeting had his or her name in the hat. The winner was – Dani-Jean Stuart.
- December's certificate is in recognition of all members and the holiday season. Trailways members will have their name in the hat. The winner to be announced shortly.

A BIG THANK-YOU TO KIRSTEN AND EMS!!!

Member Highlight

By Kirsten Hildonen



I've lived in Londonderry with my family since I was 11. (Yes, a Massachusetts transplant) I spent lots of time on a bike in Jr. High as it was my main mode of transportation, and then at LHS I participated in and staffed the Operation Venture outdoor program- hiking, rock climbing, ropes and cycling. I went down to college in New Orleans, but realized that it was too flat—no challenge on a bike, and plenty dangerous besides! I missed the seasons, so I came back up here after a year. One of my friends who worked at the Manchester EMS insisted I apply. So now, three years later, I've worked my way up to assistant manager, and outreach coordinator. I first heard about Trailways through an Internet search, which brought me to Londonderry's site. After reading the site, I contacted the group first as a representative of EMS, but after attending the meeting signed on as a member myself. I love the idea of a group trying to encourage alternate modes of transportation and aiding in making them available. It always amazes me the looks of pity/confusion/amazement I get if I walk the half-mile to the bank or drug store—as if there was no life before cars. Also, Trailway's success will help ensure that Londonderry residents are aware of and take pride in the outdoor resource in their own backyard—before, I was never aware of the extent of the Musquash or the existence of Kendall Pond Conservation Area. Now I can't wait for snowshoeing there—if we ever get snow! When I'm not working or sleeping, I love being outside. Although I'm more often on my feet than on wheels, I enjoy hiking, backpacking, snowshoeing, skiing, snowboarding and the occasional rock climbing. However, doing these activities with me always involves a certain amount of risk, as I am not terribly coordinated and have done everything from breaking my wrist hiking, to getting a concussion snowboarding, to spraining my ankle in an unfortunate accident involving toe clips!

Upcoming Regular Meetings

We meet at the Leach Library (in the meeting room downstairs) the first Monday of every month. The meetings start at 7:30 pm and wrap up at about 9:00 pm. The next meetings are scheduled for:

February 4
March 4
April 1 (April Fools Day!)
May 6

All members and interested parties are invited.

Welcome to Our Newest Members!

Jodi & Ron Chandler
Cori Creran (she bravely volunteered to be the co-chair of the Recreational Trails Committee along with Marilyn Deluca)
Kirsten Hildonen (see the following member highlight of Kirsten)
Ray & Carol Kibbee
Jean Manley
Pam & Tom Perry
Kelly & Mike Puccio (joining us at the Supporting Member level)
Ron Russell

Answer to Londonderry Trivia

According to the dictionary, the word "musquash" comes to us from the Algonquian Indians and means: muskrat, which is a large rodent that lives close to water. It has glossy brown fur, a long flattened tail and webbed hind feet. From its nose to the base of its tail, it's 9 to 13 inches long with an additional 7 to 11 inch tail. It may not be the most glamorous thing to name our conservation area after, but it's a great area nonetheless. It's unclear how the conservation area came by its name--do any of our readers know the history? If so, please contact Scott Hamilton, the newsletter editor at s.k.hamilton@mindspring.com