

**Sanford Trails and Urban Forestry Committee
Annual Report for 2023
Submitted by Lawrence Furbish, Committee Chair**

The officers for the year were: Chair, Lawrence Furbish, Vice-Chair, Hazen Carpenter, Secretary, Sam Parady, Treasurer, Brady Lloyd.

The additional members of the Committee were: Thom Gagne, Dollie Hutchins, Katie Manende-Hall, Dave Parent, and Al Pollard. Two members resigned during the year, Jeff Wells and Kevin McKeon, and one member was removed for non-attendance. Two new members applied and were appointed by the City Council for 2024, Melanie Taylor Coombs and Eric St Onge

The Trails Committee had a busy and productive year with members putting in almost 600 volunteer hours of service. Actually, I think that figure is low as sometimes members forget to report their hours. Thanks to the members for their commitment to the committee and the Sanford trails system. The trails are a great asset to the City and they only exist and thrive because of the dedication of our committee members.

Undoubtedly the most important change to our Trails system this year was the removal of ATVs from the Rail Trail and the work done by Stuart and Torno to improve the section of the Trail from Hanson's Ridge to Main Street. We decided to use a significant amount of our City allocation to pay for this work because of the Rail Trail's importance and because this was probably the most-used part of the Trail. With these changes we have noticed a significant increase in the use of the Trail. Virtually every time I drive past the Hansons Ridge trailhead, I see many cars parked there and when I walk the Hazen Carpenter loop off the Rail Trail, I meet walkers, and on the Rail Trail itself, bikers. We appreciate your vote to make the Trail a city park and to adopt the guidelines for its use. More remains to be done. We are working to devise some gate modifications that will allow access but keep out those ATV users who don't know about or refuse to follow the rules. One of our next much needed goals is to repair and restore the sections of the Trail from Hanson's Ridge to Lebanon. This will be a more expensive and involved task given the bad condition of that section of the trail due to ATV damage.

Another significant threat to the Rail Trail is beaver activity around Deering Pond. Several years ago, we had a beaver deceiver installed at the outlet of the pond which is a short way up the Hazen Carpenter Trail. This apparatus is designed to keep the beavers from constructing a dam, but it was installed in such a way as to raise the level of the pond. This resulted in an increase of the wetlands down along the Rail Trail, an area that had been flooded in the past and where we had a culvert and additional gravel put down to raise the level of the trail. We consulted a Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife biologist who recommended a new deceiver and we contracted with Eric Thorpe, a licensed animal control officer who installed a new deceiver funded jointly with Trails money and a contribution from the Mousam Way Land Trust. This work was done in October and it has been working fine despite the enormous amounts of rain we have had. But, those pesky beavers are now working down near the Trail itself, so we have to keep on top of this issue.

The High School Loop Trail, which is a State Recreational Trail Program (RTP) Grant, went out to bid and Stuart and Torno did a terrific job. The two new legs create a loop with Alumni Blvd. and the Mousam Way bike path as the other two sides. It will not only add to the biking and walking possibilities but will enhance the training and competition opportunities for the SHS cross country team. Brady is in the process of closing out this grant so we can apply for another

RTP grant for the Rail Trail. But one additional step is in process. The SRTC welding students will be working with their instructor, Adam Hartford, to modify the 3 gates retaining their ability to stop motor vehicles but allowing easier and more friendly access to walkers and bicyclists.

The revamp of the School Street trailhead was completed providing much improved parking for the entrance to the Mousam Way bike path and the Mousam Way South trail. In addition, more work was done on the trailhead and kiosk on William Oscar Emery Drive. It will celebrate the various types of trees producing wood that has been important to Sanford and New England's history. This William Oscar Emery project has been spearheaded by Lee Burnett and he deserves credit for making it much more noticeable and attractive, something that will be even more important when the Mousam Way Promenade is completed.

We want to express our appreciation to the Sanford Public Works Department, especially Matt Hill and Pete Smith, for their help in dealing with some erosion issues on our trails on Spartan Drive and Oak Street. They were terrific.

We continue our cooperative work with other organizations:

- Snow Goers Club to upgrade the Farm Trail north of Blanchard Road for snowmobiling in the winter and walking during other seasons. The weather and soft ground has seriously delayed this project, but it is still in the works.
- The Native Plant Trust and 3 Rivers Land Trust to develop a trail from the Community Forest on Oak street to the Rhododendron Preserve. This is a complicated project because of the terrain and when completed it will greatly improve access to this beautiful, but not often visited preserve.
- Mousam Way Land Trust to repair a washout on the McKeon Reserve access road to the Rail Trail.
- Greenmars, the developers of the old Nasson dorms regarding some trails they are planning near the dorms and the Rail Trail.

We also completed a number of smaller scale projects during the year:

- had striping painted on Marginal Way to clearly delineate where the Mousam Way North Trail goes when it is on the pavement.
- participated in the Healthy Living Expo at the YMCA.
- required CMP to install and grade appropriate gravel when they had completed their work on the transmission lines at the trailhead on Stanley Road.
- celebrated the Trails System for being voted the best outdoor activity in Sanford on the Annual BOSS (Best of Sanford Springvale) awards.
- published an article in the Sanford Springvale News about safe use of our trails during the hunting season.

- cleaned brush and weeds on the trails near Emery Street, Breton Avenue, and School Street.

We amended our Bylaws, which you approved, to deal with the issue of inactive members who do not attend meetings and to be sure Trails Committee members are eligible to vote in Sanford.

The interest of Sanford's citizens in our trails system continues to grow as our Facebook page now has 2,282 likes and our Instagram page has 538 followers.

Finally, I want to thank the City, especially you, the Council, Brady Lloyd, Parks and Recreation Director, Steve Buck, and Matt Hill and Pete Smith from Public Works, for support both financial and otherwise. It is greatly appreciated.