

Dummerston Loop Trail Steps Forward

By John Evans

The new 2.2-mile woodland loop trail at Dummerston Center will be open for hikers by the time you read this article. Volunteers have been busy at work marking the trail and clearing the path of downed trees, limbs and brush.

Entrance to the trail is at the open field at the junction of Park Laughton and Bunker roads. Hikers should park at the town offices parking lot and not along Park Laughton Road.

The beginning of the trail is identified by four-by-four marker posts which lead hikers across the field and into the far tree line. White flagging and white discs mark the main trail. The loop section is identified by yellow flags and discs. Any time hikers see double discs or flagging it is a signal to pay attention, as the trail will change direction.

The marker discs are permanent. The flagging will be removed as the path become worn through hiking use and is easily followed. Care should be taken by hikers to follow trail markers. It is very easy to become involved in conversation or admiring the natural beauty of the landscape and to walk off the trail onto one of several former logging roads or a snowmobile trail.

The first section of the trail is on property

owned by Margaret Everitt. The trail then crosses land owned by Sam Bunker and enters town land known as Prospect Hill. After a short distance on town property, a loop trail is formed. At this point flagging and discs change from white to yellow.

The loop crosses Prospect Hill below the crest and follows the boundary with the Yale forest as it enters a second property owned by Everitt.

The trail project would not be possible without the cooperation of landowners. The Dummerston Nature Reserve and Trail Committee is especially grateful to Margaret and Sam. These two individuals are helping to establish the first stage in a trail that one day may enable hikers to walk through Dummerston and onto the existing trail system to the north maintained by

the Putney Mountain Association and the Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association. The committee is a working group of the Putney Mountain Association.

Trail volunteers participating in the flagging and clearing include Steve Anderson, Steve Darrow, John Evans, Jared Flynn, Roger Haydock, Rip Lhamon, Jack Lilly, Bill McKim and Bill Schmidt. Volunteers who wish to work on the trail or serve on the Dummerston Nature Reserve and Trail Committee can call John Evans at 258-2688 or send an email to evansjohnb@gmail.com.

Work remaining on the trail includes side hilling in steeper places and identifying natural features of the land. Markers will explain these features and provide environmental information about the landscape.

Townpeople Work to Save Farm & Forest Land

continued from page 1

never had enough money in it to buy any land. The fund now has about \$13,000 in it.

Many other towns have added much more money to their open space protection funds, and used the money to buy land and protect it from development. Charlotte, Vermont has put \$100,000 into its open space fund in recent years. About 3,500 people live in Charlotte; about 2,000 live in Dummerston.

The town immediately to the east of Dummerston, Chesterfield, New Hampshire, is home to about 3,800 people. Last year, Chesterfield used \$51,000 from its open space protection fund to buy land. The town still has about \$150,000 in the fund.

A study by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns found that the Vermont towns with the most protected open space have the lowest property taxes. A higher percent-

age of the land in many towns in Windham County is protected from development than in Dummerston.

On September 18 at 6 p.m., a group of Dummerston residents will meet in Dummerston to sign a petition that reads: "We the undersigned legal voters of the Town of Dummerston petition the Selectboard to place the following article on the warning for the Annual Town Meeting to be held on Tuesday March 4, 2008 . Article___: Shall the Town put \$20,000 into the Town's Farmland Protection Fund every year by December 1?"

We need 75 signatures by Jan. 24. Blank petitions will be available for people who want to gather signatures. For the location of the meeting, please call Eesha Williams at 254-2531. If you want to sign the petition but can't make it to the meeting, please call Williams.

Once there is enough money in the fund to buy land, anyone can pick up an application form at the town office to ask the town to buy a piece of land that is for sale. The farmland committee will make a recommendation to the selectboard on whether the application should be approved. The selectboard makes the final decision.

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