Taking Charge

Creating a Volunteer Land Stewardship Program

MACC Annual Conference

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Weston Conservation Administrator

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MACC Board Member
Creating a Volunteer Land Stewardship Program

Workshop Outline

- 10 Steps to a Successful Stewardship Program
- Examples of 2 stewardship programs
- Tips
- Taking Action – Yes You Can!
10 Steps to a Successful Stewardship Program

Commission’s O.S. Role

- You have an obligation to plan, acquire, and manage Open Space - Chapter 40, Section 8C
- Proper land management justifies future land acquisition
10 Steps to a Successful Stewardship Program

1. Determine Your Assets - Baseline Info
Walk boundaries, post signs, locate infrastructure, note encroachments
10 Steps to a Successful Stewardship Program

2. Determine Your Needs

Maintain what you have?
10 Steps to a Successful Stewardship Program

2. Determine Your Needs
   - Protect/enhance wildlife habitat?
   - Invasive spp. removal
   - Mowing fields
10 Steps to a Successful Stewardship Program

2. Determine Your Needs (cont.)

- Encourage Passive Recreation?
  - new trails
- Create community?
  - scout projects
  - letterboxing
- Education?
  - trail walks
10 Steps to a Successful Stewardship Program

3. Determine Program Structure

- Decision-making/leadership structure
  - Will volunteers or staff determine projects?
- Core small group or open invitations?
- Develop consistent schedule
  - Day, Time, Duration
10 Steps to a Successful Stewardship Program

4. **Identify Volunteer Roles**

- Generic Volunteer – worker bee
- Specialized Volunteers
  - Administrative Coordinator
  - Field Coordinator
  - Outreach/ Education Coordinator
- ConCom members – tap their passion
10 Steps to a Successful Stewardship Program

5. *Recruit Volunteers*
   - Hold a volunteer recruitment night
   - Invite scouts, schools, & colleges
   - Engage your ‘complainers’ part of the solution
10 Steps to a Successful Stewardship Program

6. Find or Develop Partnerships

- Local Land Trusts
- “Friends Groups”
- Regional Orgs
- Outdoor Store
- Scouts
10 Steps to a Successful Stewardship Program

7. **Train Volunteers -- Orientation**
   - Broad overview of program
   - Clear expectations
   - Maps, checklists, etc.
   - Food
   - Hats, badges
   - Trail markers & land regulations signs
   - Tools – nails, pruning shears
10 Steps to a Successful Stewardship Program

8. Get to Work

- Kick-off event
  - Blitz
  - Special work day or cleanup
  - Trail creation
- Regularly scheduled work days
- Make it fun – food, education, humor
10 Steps to a Successful Stewardship Program

9. Engage & Nurture Volunteers

- It takes time and caring
  - Lots of emails, phone calls, etc.
- Respect their time
  - Regular schedule
  - Defined start/end time
10 Steps to a Successful Stewardship Program

9. Engage & Nurture Volunteers (cont.)

- Respect their interests
  - Ensure roles are appropriate
  - Tasks in which volunteers will be successful
- Teach new skills
  - Slide show/presentation
  - Animal Track and signs
  - Trail building skills
10 Steps to a Successful Stewardship Program

9. Engage & Nurture Volunteers (cont.)

- Respect their insights
  - Make sure volunteers are heard
    - Brainstorming night
    - Ask for their feedback
"Successful citizen … stewardship programs are partnerships, and partnerships are all about relationships, and establishing and cultivating relationships take both time and dedication."

CONNIE G. MYERS and DON HUNGER
10 Steps to a Successful Stewardship Program

10. Volunteer Recognition

- “Special thanks” section in Annual Report
- End of year party
- Recognition in paper
- Holiday cards, etc.
Stewardship Program
Case Studies

Maynard

Starting From the Beginning
Determine What You Have

“Land Blitz”
Maynard Volunteer Stewardship Program

Goals

- Roughly characterize all Con Com parcels
- Recruit stewards
- Identify priorities for work days
Maynard Volunteer Stewardship Program

Recruit - Advertise a Volunteer Night

- Website
- Flyers
- Press releases
- Letters to abutters of conservation land
- Community email lists
- Other Boards/Commissions
Maynard Volunteer Stewardship Program

Hold Volunteer Night (w/ food!)
- Who we are
- Why we need you
- Description of roles to be filled
- Volunteer application – get commitments
- Save the date for the first “Blitz” day

Email thank you & work day reminder
Maynard Volunteer Stewardship Program

Preparation

- Figure out what parcels you own
- Prepare parcel folders
  - Maps (assessors, as-builts, etc.)
  - aerial photos
  - Parcel Characterization Worksheets
  - business cards
Maynard Parcel Characterization

Parcel Name: **GROVE STREET**  
Parcel Location: **GROVEST. NEAR MASS PINE**  
Date: 8-15-08  
Steward: **BILL FADDEN**

(Please use numbers to cross-reference comments below with locations on the map)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trail Characteristics (none, wet, wooded, short, wet)</th>
<th>Parcel Description (wooded, dry, rocky, etc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2) OLD CART PATH OVERGROWN</td>
<td>WOODED - MOSTLY OAK/PINE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural Features (hickory grove, stream, cliff)</th>
<th>Man-Made Features (parking, picnic, stone wall)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4) EXTENSIVE WETLAND</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems (fallen trees, wet areas, trash, access)</th>
<th>Opportunities (new trail, parking, bridge, sign)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3) SHED ENCLOSEMENT FROM ABUTTER</td>
<td>1) POSSIBLE LOCATION FOR PARKING LOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5) POSSIBLE TRAIL CONNECTION TO CEMETARY LAND?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Maynard Volunteer Stewardship Program

Blitz Day

- Teams of 2-3
- Walk the properties
- Annotate the maps
- Fill in the Parcel Characterization Worksheets
- Take photos (interesting features, encroachments)

Reconvene

- Food and Fun
- Commitments
Maynard Volunteer Stewardship Program

Follow up

1. Start a permanent file on each property

2. Create master spreadsheet of properties
   - Trails
   - Infrastructure (bridges, benches)
   - Encroachments
   - Management needs
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Encroach.</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Street</th>
<th>Encroacher</th>
<th>Desc. of Encroachment</th>
<th>Details, cont.</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/01/03</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Conant Rd</td>
<td>Jonathan Spector</td>
<td>garden and rhododendron bushes planted on conservation land - asked to remove in 2004; abutter indicated work was done</td>
<td>GB and MG unable to find property bound; surveyor will re-install; site visit needed</td>
<td>Resolved; should monitor</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07/05/05</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Conant Rd</td>
<td>Anna Sande</td>
<td>light fixtures and lawn on Conservation Land; abutter was asked to remove lights; cease mowing lawn</td>
<td>GB and MG unable to find property bound; need to re-check?</td>
<td>Sent Letter in 9/10 requiring mowing to cease; Landowner has complied; should be monitored annually</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/27/00</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Concord Rd</td>
<td>B. Fishman</td>
<td>fence and pasture on Conservation Land</td>
<td></td>
<td>resolved; but some new dumping discovered - Tom or Eran to talk with landowners?</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/20/04</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>Concord Rd</td>
<td>J. Wagner</td>
<td>front yard lawn encroachment; approx. 5,917 sq ft</td>
<td>date of encroachment unknown - possibly existed when current landowner bought property; boundary line quite close to front door;</td>
<td>HOLD?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/23/04</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>Concord Rd</td>
<td>Scott Niemann</td>
<td>lawn on Conservation Land</td>
<td>Front boundary marker missing; survey to replace; strip of conservation land in backyard being maintained as lawn</td>
<td>Sent Letter in 7/10 requiring mowing to cease; Site visit needed</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/23/04</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>Concord Rd</td>
<td>Joseph Sheehan</td>
<td>lawn on Conservation Land</td>
<td>Strip of conservation land in back being maintained as laws (approx. 16' strip); some landscape dumping</td>
<td>Sent Letter in 7/10 requiring mowing to cease; Site visit needed</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/21/05</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Crescent St.</td>
<td>David Schumann</td>
<td>play structure and garden plants on conservation land</td>
<td>play structure and garden plants removed; a small strip (5-10') of lawn being maintained on conservation land</td>
<td>Landowner sent letter in 2009 to cease mowing conservation land; landowner requested extension to spring 2011</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/01/04</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Hemlock</td>
<td>Richard Barno</td>
<td>Lawn on Conservation Land</td>
<td>date of encroachment unknown; approximately 10-13 wide strip of conservation land being maintained as lawn</td>
<td>HOLD?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/15/10</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Radcliffe</td>
<td>A. Abramson</td>
<td>Major Encroachment</td>
<td>fence, grading, landscaping conducted on Conservation Land; owner received building permit in 2006 approving fence on HIS land</td>
<td>Send letter explaining our findings; ask that fence be relocated onto his property;</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/02/08</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Ripley Ln</td>
<td>Ralph Earle</td>
<td>maintaining two strips of conservation land</td>
<td>maintaining two strips of conservation land as field</td>
<td>5/20/09 signed agreement that abutter may continue maintaining conservation land as a field but such use shall terminate with sale of property</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/29/04</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Stonehedge Rd</td>
<td>Jim Hutchinson</td>
<td>relocated stone wall and erected fence on Conservation Land; some fill brought in to make abutters land level</td>
<td>Date of stone wall relocation unknown; fence is new, continues to access Conservation land to get to private parcel in rear</td>
<td>Letter sent in 9/10 asking landowner to move rock wall back to original location, and remove fence from Conservation Land; Site visit scheduled for end of October</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/29/06</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>Sudbury Road</td>
<td>Ronald Sonkin</td>
<td>extended lawn onto Conservation Land; asked to cease maintaining lawn on conservation land</td>
<td>lawn is growing wild on conservation land; compliance</td>
<td>Resolved</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Updated 11/21/10
Maynard Volunteer Stewardship Program

Follow up (cont.)

3. Determine priority goals
   - Fix or create trails and other infrastructure (bridge, water bar, parking, trail head signs)
   - Handle encroachments
   - Create basic trail maps
   - Clean ups
Maynard Volunteer Stewardship Program

Follow up (cont.)

4. Confirm Lead and Assistant Stewards

5. Steward Orientation
   - Give out packets
   - Walk a site together

6. Workdays
Framingham Volunteer Stewardship Program

Framingham

Maintain What You Have

Lead Stewards & Work days
Preparing for a Successful Workday

Engage Field Coordinator or Lead Steward

Set a Specific Goal

- New trail, boardwalk repair, river clean-up, invasive species removal

Reconnaissance

- Flag ahead of time
- Determine work leaders and tasks
- Determine time requirement
- Tools: power tools (waivers), hand tools (ask volunteers to bring them?)
Fix eroded bank

Flag new trail
Preparing for a successful workday

Paperwork
- Permitting - wetland permit, etc.
- Notify people
  - Abutters - heads-up
  - Volunteers - save the date
  - Volunteers - specific email
  - Volunteers - reminder email
- Coordinate with DPW - cleanup needs
Preparing for a successful workday

The Workday: In the Field

- Waivers
- Map and Schedule – what to do, where to do it, when to reconvene
- Tools, bug spray, Tecnu
- First-aid kit, emergency information
- Water
Preparing for a successful workday

Follow-up After the Work Day

- Check in with DPW about trash pick up
- Send thank you letters
- Send reminders about the next work day
Dealing with Encroachments

Encroachments are intrusions and alterations on town land, such as:

- Extension of lawns or gardens;
- Clearing/cutting of vegetation;
- Erection of sheds, fences, or play sets; or
- Dumping of yard waste
Dealing with Encroachments

1. Take pictures
   - From the property line and from multiple directions

2. Characterize the Encroachment
   - Aerial photos
   - Assessor’s maps
   - As-built plans
   - Wetland maps

3. Prioritize
   - How significant is the encroachment?
   - Staff/volunteer time/resources
Dealing with Encroachments

4. Contact the Encroacher

- Write a letter to the probable encroacher (“we noticed there may be an issue”)
- Arrange for a site visit
Dealing with Encroachments

5. Site Visit

- Is there a discrepancy?
  - Use landmarks, plans, etc.

- Hopefully come to a consensus
Dealing with Encroachments

6. If encroachment is confirmed, require encroacher to restore:
   - Remove encroaching structures (fences, walls, play sets, sheds, etc.)
   - Cease mowing or maintaining encroaching lawn
   - Re-naturalize - Planting plan
   - Give a deadline
Dealing with Encroachments

Tips:

- Create templates
  - Initial letter
  - Site visit form
  - Closure form
- Monitor for 2-3 years
- Thank encroacher for complying

WESTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
P.O. BOX 378
WESTON, MA 02493
TELEPHONE: 781-893-7320 x 322
FAX: 781-529-0112
GRZENDA.M@WESTONMASS.ORG

Site Visit Summary
This serves as a legal notice of the Weston Conservation Commission’s findings on a recent site visit.

A. Location of Site Visit: ____________________________________________________________
B. Property Owner: ________________________________________________________________
C. Date of Site Visit: _______________________________________________________________
D. Reason for Site Visit: ____________________________________________________________
E. Findings (positive): _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
F. Findings (negative): _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
G. Required Actions:
   □ Cease immediately all work on the property
   □ Call the office to discuss the matter by ____________
   □ Attend the ________ meeting of the Conservation Com. to discuss the matter. Call the office for details. by ____________
   □ ________________________________ by ____________
   □ ________________________________ by ____________
H. Follow-up Site Visit:
   A representative from the Weston Conservation Commission will conduct a follow-up site visit to ensure continued compliance on or after the date listed below, unless you call the office at 781-893-7320 x322 to schedule a specific date and time for the site visit. Please feel free to call the office to discuss the matter. __________________________________________________

I. Issuing Agent of the Commission
   Signature: __________________________________ Date: __________________
   Printed name: Michele Grzenda, Conservation Agent

Questions: Questions concerning this notice should be directed to the Weston Conservation Commission, telephone 781-893-7320 x322
Dealing with Encroachments

- Encroachments can be “sticky”
  - Be careful using volunteers
    - Lines may be hard to establish - surveyor may be required
    - Encroachments may be very old/historic
    - Violators may be uncooperative
  - Municipality ultimately “owns” the encroachment
  - The homeowner can never claim “adverse possession”
Challenges with Volunteer Stewardship Programs

Getting it to be Self-Sustaining

- Finding time, money, and resources
- Hard to keep as a Con Com priority
- Retaining committed volunteers
- Matching workers with appropriate jobs
Challenges with Volunteer Stewardship Programs

Dealing with People

- Getting volunteers to really commit
- Channeling an overly passionate volunteer
- Creating a broad sense of community (not just an interest in their back yard)
Tips and Reminders

Establishing realistic expectations

- It takes time to build a strong program
- Recognize limitations of volunteers
- Some promising volunteers will disappear
- Make sure that over-zealous volunteers don’t run you ragged or cause you to lose focus on priorities
Tips and Reminders

Don’t bite off more than you can chew

- Start off with one goal
- Find lead stewards for 2-3 properties first
- Try a program on for a season
- Consider partnering with another non-profit to conduct a joint work day
Tips and Reminders

Capitalizing on volunteer motivation

- Interesting and meaningful work
- Clear responsibilities
- Camaraderie
- Recognition
- Fun!
Tips and Reminders

Your Stewardship Program will Evolve

- Refine goals as needed
- Highlight progress
- Have a wish list

Look for volunteers able to take on a leadership role
Resources

Download Workshop Handouts
http://www.maccweb.org/resources_links.html
  click on “Volunteer Land Stewardship Program Documents”

Connections is the electronic newsletter from the Department of Conservation & Recreation’s Greenways & Trails Program:
http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/greenway/newsletter.htm
Resources

Hands For Nature: A Volunteer Management Handbook -  

Lexington MA Conservation Commission: This is an excellent example of a volunteer handbook/information manual with information on safety, proper trail trimming, invasive species, and more -  

Retention and Recognition – from “Volunteer Management:  
http://www.casanet.org/program-management/volunteer-manage/retenrec.htm
Framingham Conservation Commission is seeking Volunteers

**Stewardship Program:**
- Lead & Assist Stewards
- Coordinators of Stewardship Activities
- Conservation Sub-Committees

**Short-term Volunteer Opportunities:**
- Seasonal “Work Days”
- Write Newspaper Articles
- Lead Nature Walks
- River & Trail Clean-up
- Carpentry Projects
- Photography for Website
- Storm drain stenciling

**Internship Opportunities (for College Students & Adults):**
- Public Education Projects
- Conservation Land Inventories

If interested, Please fill out a **Volunteer Application Form**

For More Information, Please check out our website:

Or call the Conservation Commission: (508) 532-5460