

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
Community Forest Stewardship Grant Program
Final Grant Report

****Final Grant Report Deadline—no later than 2 months after completing grant activities or September 1 (whichever is earlier)****

DATE: August 16, 2011

CONTACT PERSON: Sarah LaValley

NAME OF ORGANIZATION: Northampton Conservation Commission

ADDRESS: 210 Main Street, Room 11

PHONE: 413-587-1263

EMAIL: slavalley@northamptonma.gov

DATE of AWARD: October 26, 2010

GRANT AMOUNT: \$15,000

PURPOSE of GRANT: Further the management recommendations and practices identified in the Mineral Hills Conservation Area Forest Stewardship Plan:

- Surveying and marking of the Area’s boundaries
- Creation of a loop trail system
- Construction of a boardwalk wetlands crossing
- Removal of invasive species

FINAL GRANT REPORT: GRANT OUTCOMES

Please answer the following questions about your group and the work it is doing.

1. What were the **expected** outcomes of the project?
The outcomes of the project were expected to be:
 - Surveyed and monumented corners
 - Clear, marked, on-the-ground property boundaries
 - A loop trail, routed around erosion-prone areas, that connects the Sylvester Road parking area with the northwest portion of the property
 - A boardwalk crossing of the wetland complex near the parking area
 - Removal of bittersweet and other invasive species in key locations
2. What were the **actual** outcomes of the project?
All of the anticipated project deliverables were able to be achieved.
3. What unexpected outcomes (positive or negative) resulted from the program?
The grant helped to foster dialog and collaboration between the Northampton Office of Planning and Development and Conservation Commission, and the Friends of Mineral Hills and neighbors.
4. Describe any collaborative effort involved in planning and/or implementing the project?
The Friends of Mineral Hills were instrumental in planning and implementing the grant project. In conjunction with Conservation Commission and Office of Planning and Development staff, the Friends blazed and cleared trails, organized neighborhood meetings, and coordinated the boardwalk building day.
5. Did you have the necessary funds to fully implement the project?
The Commission was able to implement the project using funding from its Conservation Fund.

6. Describe any future maintenance this project may require. What financial resources will be available to continue this project?
The boardwalk will require minimal maintenance annually, which will be performed by Conservation Commission staff. Continuing trail maintenance and new trail blazing will be performed by the Friends of Mineral Hills. Invasive species removal areas
7. Share a brief story of how this project impacted the life of someone (if applicable).
There are no individual stories to share as of yet. We hope soon to receive feedback from conservation area visitors who are now more easily able to enjoy the Mineral Hills.

COMMUNITY CHANGES

1. In your opinion, has the grant increased involvement, knowledge, awareness, and/or uses (recreational, forest product, other) of the community forest land? If so, how?
The grant helped increase knowledge of the Mineral Hills Conservation Area, and also to increase access and use. The new boardwalk provides an entrance to portions of the conservation area that were previously very difficult to access. From the main parking area, hikers can now easily access a network of trails that have now been flagged, and are currently being cleared by volunteers.
2. Since receiving the grant, have other local environmental issues received community attention? If so, what issues?
Environmental issues are often on the front burner in Northampton. Sustainable farming and local agriculture have been recent discussion topics.

COMMUNITY FOREST STEWARDSHIP GRANT PROGRAM IMPACT ON COMMUNITY

1. Please tell us if and how the grant and support made a difference to your community and organization. If you had not received the grant from DCR, what difference, if any, would it have made to your project?

The boardwalks would not have been able to be purchased without the stewardship grant. Additionally, news of the grant award sparked renewed interest in the Mineral Hills by the Friends' group and others, and helped to advance construction of the trail network.
2. Any additional needs that, if fulfilled, would have helped to advance your project?
The grant was an excellent opportunity to implement recommendations from the Stewardship Plan.

MARKETING and PUBLIC RELATIONS

1. Include a press release and corresponding news articles and announcements about your project.
Press releases and news articles are attached.
2. Include brochures, maps, presentations, and other related materials purchased and/or designed with the grant.
Grant funds were not used to create any presentations or maps. However, a working map of the new trails is enclosed.
3. Include a copy of letters that you sent to Senators and Representatives regarding your grant project.
Letters to the delegates were not sent as part of this project.
4. Include at least one photograph from your project (digital or print).
Photos from the boardwalk installation day are attached.

GRANT PROGRAM EVALUATION

1. Please comment about our program and how you think we can improve it to meet the needs of communities in Massachusetts.
Implementation timeframes are short, and could pose a problem for some communities.
2. Do you know of other communities that might benefit from our program? Please include names and addresses and we will contact them.

Sarah LaValley

From: Sarah LaValley
Sent: Monday, November 15, 2010 2:51 PM
To: 'Adam Cohen [winningwriters@winningwriters.com]'; 'Bill Dwight (bdwight@comcast.net)'; 'Chad Cain (ccain@gazettenet.com)'; 'Chris Collins (collins@whmp.com)'; 'David Reid (drnews@msn.com)'; 'dcrowley@gazettenet.com'; 'Diane Lederman'; 'drnewstiger@gmail.com'; 'Fred Contrada (fcontrada@repub.com)'; 'James Lowe'; 'Larry Rivais'; 'Laurie Loisel (lloisel@gazettenet.com)'; 'Mary Serreze'; 'Matt Pilon'; 'oboss@gazettenet.com'; 'Paul Tuthill, WAMC'; 'WFCR'; 'WHMP News'
Cc: 'steve.mark218@comcast.net'; C. Mason Maronn (cmasonmaronn@comcast.net); Downey Meyer; Kevin Lake (Kevin.l.lake@gmail.com); Lisa Fusco (llfusco@comcast.net); Susan Carbin (Scarbin1973@aol.com); Tim Parshall (timparshall@yahoo.com); Valerie J. Vignaux (vvignaux@comcast.net); Wayne Feiden
Subject: Mineral Hills Community Forest Stewardship Grant Announcement

I am pleased to announce that the Northampton Conservation Commission has been awarded a \$15,000 grant from the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Community Forest Stewardship program for work at the Mineral Hills Conservation Area.

The grant program is available to communities to help them implement the goals identified in Forest Stewardship Plans. These are 10-year plans created by professional foresters that present management options and practices designed to maintain the land in a productive and healthy condition for the next generation, based on landowner priorities.

The grant provides funds to create a loop trail system around the area, as well as install a boardwalk to connect the parking lot on Sylvester Road with those new and existing trails.

Mineral Hills was acquired from several different property owners so existing trails do not connect. A new loop system will make the area much easier to enjoy.

There is a significant wetlands complex surrounding the parking lot, and even in dry months, it's very hard to access the rest of the property without wet feet.

We are excited to be able to connect the parking area, which serves as the main access point, to the great hiking and excellent views within the Mineral Hills.

Construction of the boardwalk will be done in cooperation with the Friends of Mineral Hills and other volunteers.

The grant will also allow us to survey and clearly mark the area's boundaries and remove invasive species, including bittersweet vines that kill native trees.

Sarah I. LaValley
Conservation, Preservation and Land Use Planner
City of Northampton
Office of Planning and Development
210 Main Street, Room 11
Northampton MA, 01060
Ph: 413.587.1263

Rare opportunity for Northampton residents to weigh in on city charter

By [CHAD CAIN](#)

Staff Writer

Tuesday, November 30, 2010

NORTHAMPTON -

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Mineral Hills work

The Conservation Commission has landed a \$15,000 grant from the state Department of Conservation and Recreation's Community Forest Stewardship program for work in the Mineral Hills Conservation Area.

The grant will pay for the creation of a loop trail system around the area, as well as to install a boardwalk to connect the parking lot on Sylvester Road with new and existing trails.

"We are excited to be able to connect the parking area, which serves as the main access point, to the great hiking and excellent views within the Mineral Hills," Sarah LaValley, the city's conservation, preservation and land use planner, said in a press release.

Construction of the boardwalk will be done in cooperation with the Friends of Mineral Hills and other volunteers.

Work also calls for marking the area's boundaries and removing invasive species, including bittersweet vines that kill native trees.

Chad Cain can be reached at ccain@gazettenet.com.

Northampton acquires 2 more pieces of conservation land

Published: Monday, June 06, 2011, 5:54 PM



By [Fred Contrada, The Republican](#)

NORTHAMPTON – The city has added two more pieces to a jigsaw puzzle of conservation land that will be suitable for framing when completed.

The 30-acre parcel in the Mineral Hills and a 20-acre piece in the adjacent Saw Mill Hills bring Northampton two steps closer to the dream of an unbroken corridor of open space that will make both hikers and wildlife feel they are in the wilderness. Except for a crossing at Sylvester Road, the two conservation areas will eventually form one big stretch of rolling hills, bogs and forest that leads into an even bigger stretch of untamed land to the west.

“These two large areas are getting closer and closer to meeting each other,” said Northampton Planning Director Wayne M. Feiden.

The Mineral Hills sale closed on Tuesday for \$200,000, with the state picking up two-thirds of the cost. It adds to the city’s already considerable holdings in the area, which borders the Westhampton town land. In addition, Westhampton and the Kestrel Trust are close to buying another 55 adjacent acres.

Feiden said an added benefit of the city’s new acquisition is that it allows Northampton to discontinue almost a half mile of Turkey Hill Road, which is currently a dirt and gravel path in that section. That means that private landowners can no longer pave that path as part of new development. In that case, the city would have had to assume responsibility for maintenance of the road.

Volunteers from Friends of Mineral Hills Conservation Area will begin constructing a boardwalk leading from a parking area on Sylvester Road on June 4 with the help of an \$8,600 state grant. The boardwalk will connect that parking area with a system of trails in the Mineral Hills that is currently inaccessible from Sylvester Road.

The 20-acre parcel at the end of Gregory Land in the Saw Mill Hills was a land taking in lieu of unpaid taxes, Feiden said. It is across Ryan Road from the Robert K. Finn Ryan Road Elementary School and will give students there, along with the general public, access to the Saw Mill Hills, which extend from Spring Street to Sylvester Road.

Feiden said automated cameras have photographed bears, bobcat and other large mammals in the Mineral Hills. Naturalists have also discovered coyote dens there. Wildlife corridors are important, Feiden said, because they allow animals to travel long distances without the risks of encountering development. In all, the city has preserved some 600 acres in the two conservation areas, by Feiden’s estimate.

Sarah LaValley

From: Mark and Steve [steve.mark218@comcast.net]
Sent: Wednesday, June 22, 2011 7:49 AM
To: editor@gazettenet.com
Cc: Sarah LaValley; Wayne Feiden; markc@gogginsrealestate.com
Subject: Letter to Editor

Please feel free to call me anytime to confirm this letter; 413-320-1162. It's late in coming, so I'm hoping it can be published soon.

Thanks!

- Mark Carmien

Dear Editor,

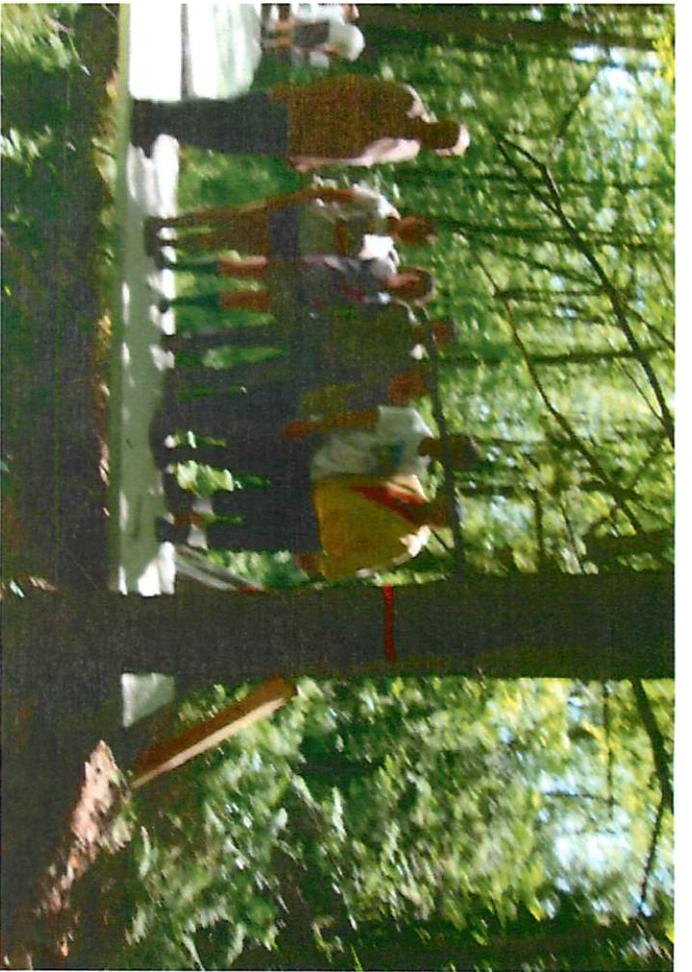
A belated "Thank You!" goes out to the 17 people who showed up to help install the new boardwalks in the Mineral Hills Conservation Area on Saturday, June 4. They did a great job! Special thanks to the 6 members of the Northampton High Key Club who rose early on a Saturday morning and worked hard in the muddy, buggy swamps. A total of 112 feet of aluminum docks were installed in three sections on the entry trail just off the parking area on Sylvester Road, Florence. Now visitors to the conservation area have a dry entry path which leads to the network of trails throughout the 400+ acres of the MHCA.

More work needs to be done this year and next to create a few new trails (most of which have been flagged) to link up the network of existing trails and allow for continuous loop hiking. "Trail Work Days" will be announced soon for later this summer and fall. A rough trail map of existing and future trails, as well as other features of the MHCA, can be found on the home page of the city's Planning Office web site; www.northamptonma.gov/opd, under the heading "Hot Topics".

I urge everyone to take time and explore the Mineral Hills on the western edge of Northampton. See the new boardwalks, take in the distance vistas, and witness the rebirth of the old stone quarry into a wildflower meadow and bird sanctuary. After you fall in love with this area, sign up to be on the Friends of Mineral Hills email list by calling me at 584-3145 so you can receive notification of the upcoming Trail Work Days. Much more work needs to be done on this new conservation area, but with the help of some dedicated volunteers it promises to become one of the jewels in Northampton's own Emerald Necklace. Let the fun begin!

With gratitude,

Mark Carmien, Coordinator of the Friends of Mineral Hills Conservation Area
Florence



MINERAL HILLS CONSERVATION AREA

As of 6/4/11

KEY:

Existing Trail ———

To-be-developed Trail - - - -

Stone Quarry ———

Undeveloped Road ———

Hill top Peak Δ

Pond ⊕

Parking ⊕

View ↘

Wetland III

Vernal Pond #

Out

Out

Out

Out

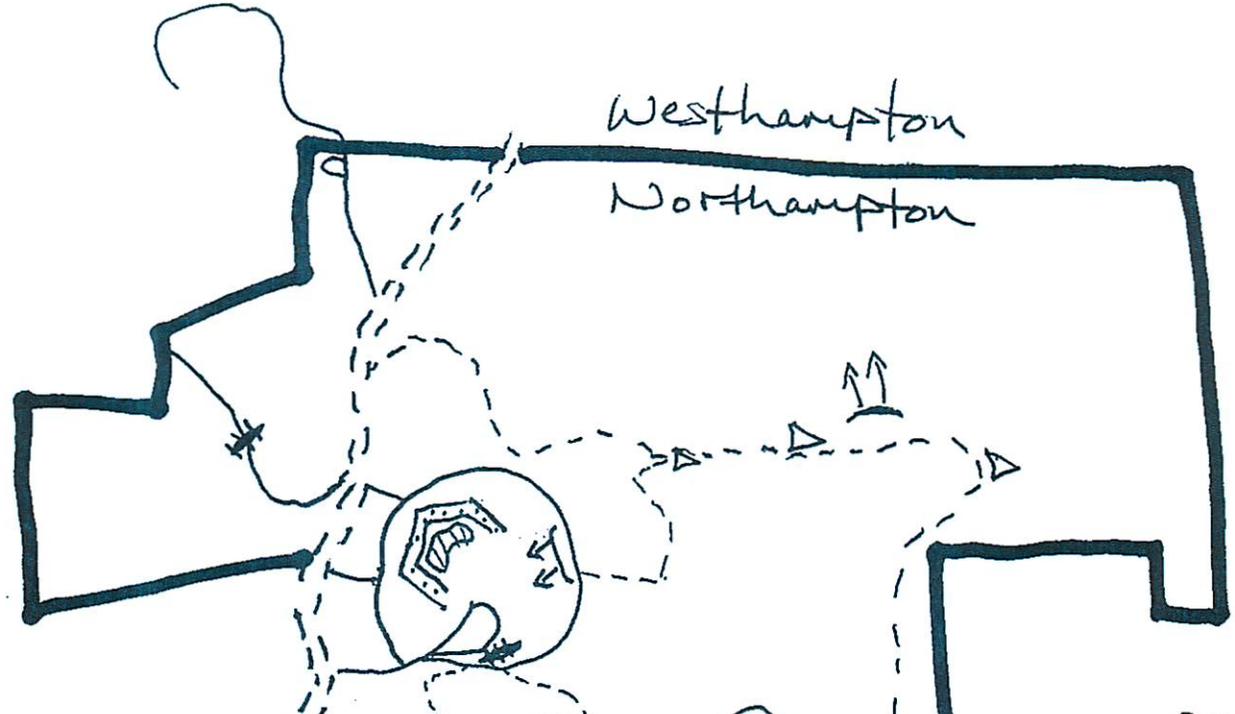
Out

Out

Out

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Yellow Bazes = Boundary
~ 400 acres total

Turkey Hill Rd

Sylvester Rd

W. Farms Rd.

Ryan Rd.