(L-r) Brendan Coll, Josh Bennett, Kyle Wiley, and Cameron Wood, all members of Boy Scout Troop 489, pitch in at the annual Rail Trail cleanup at Blackwater Park. Staff photo: Bob Bussey

Rail Trail From Lebanon To West Franklin Planned By 2010

By Alex Bernhard
Friends of the Northern Rail Trail

Here is an update as of June 15 on connecting the Rail Trail in Andover to the Rail Trail in Danbury (which continues on to Lebanon).

Background

In 2006 the Friends of the Northern Rail Trail in Merrimack County (FNRT) received a $258,000 (since increased to $345,000) grant of federal funds under the Transportation Enhancement Program administered by New Hampshire Department of Transportation (DOT) to build 8.3 miles of trail from Potter Place in Andover north to the Danbury Town Garage.

FNRT has already built eight miles south from Potter Place to Dyer's Crossing in Andover and has a grant to build another two miles from Dyer's Crossing to Webster Lake in West Franklin.

Another rail trail group has built 25 miles of trail from Lebanon to the Danbury Town Garage. As a result, when this project is finished, there will be 43.3 miles of four-season trail from West Franklin to Lebanon – the longest four-season rail trail in New Hampshire.

Current Status

The project is being constructed in two segments – installing bridge railings on six bridges in Danbury, and then covering the existing stone ballast with 4" of stone dust.

We are currently awaiting DOT approval to start design work on the bridge railings. A number of the bridges have no railings, and for these VHB (FNRT's engineers) will design the railings and the manner in which they tie to the bridge structures.

In other cases, where the existing railings do not meet federal standards, we will supplement them with additional railings. We hope to have DOT's approval in time to complete design work, award contracts, construct, and install the bridge railings this fall. We need to have the bridgework done before we can lay down the stone dust.

We are working with VHB on a specification for the stone dust using the experience we have gained over five years of building trail in Andover. We plan to advertise for stone dust in the spring of '10 and purchase and apply it to the trail during the summer of '10. If we follow this schedule, our Danbury neighbors will see our grader and compacter preparing the trail in Danbury in the late spring of next year.

If you would like further information about this project, please contact FNRT's project manager, Alex Bernhard, at 735-5071 or AABernhard@comcast.net.

Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway

The Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge (SRK) Greenway Coalition's July hike schedule offers four perspectives on local landscapes. All hikes are free to the public. Please contact the leader a day before to get details on start time and location. Bring water, sun screen, hat, and a snack.

Saturday, July 4: Climb Bog Mountain in Wilmot for views of area peaks. Call Brian Faughnan, 526-7838. 3 miles, moderate.

Saturday, July 11: A slower morning hike in Andover along the Northern Rail Trail, ending at Potter Place. Call Ralph Spofford, 526-6568. 3 miles, easy.

Saturday, July 18: Climb Ragged Mountain Fish & Game trails in Andover to the ridge line for views and woodlands. Call Wayne Nicoll, 735-5721. 6 miles, difficult.

Saturday, July 25: A lakeside amble in New London on Little Sunapee Forest Associates land. Call Ralph Spofford, 526-6568. 2 miles, easy

The SRK Greenway Coalition is a non-profit volunteer organization that promotes hiking and land conservation. Its 75 miles of trails are open to all. For information, visit SRKG.com.

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