Friends of the Northern Rail Trail

By Alex Bernhard
Friends of the Northern Rail Trail

On Friday, August 25, the Friends of the Northern Rail Trail in Merrimack County completed construction on another 1.7 miles of trail on the Andover portion of the Northern Rail Trail. This newly-constructed trail section extends an existing trail built by the Friends last year that starts at the restored railroad station in Potter Place at the intersection of New Hampshire Route 11 and US Route 4. The new section ends at Switch Road just off Route 11 in East Andover. The combined trails provide 3.4 miles of off-highway trail for bicyclists, walkers, and baby carriages.

The new trail follows the Blackwater River and has a 12-foot travel lane of compacted stone dust that sits on top of several inches of compacted railroad ballast. The trail has a smooth surface and is one of the finest in the state.

Both trails were built by the Friends, a nonprofit volunteer organization with members from several towns near the trail. The goal of the Friends is to provide a four-season rail trail from Grafton to the Boscawen/Concord line, a distance of about 34 miles. The work done so far has been funded by grants of federal funds over the last two years, administered by the New Hampshire Bureau of Trails. Peter Crowell of New London contributed the use of construction equipment, equipment operators, and some materials.

In addition to the two federal grants, the Friends have also been awarded a third grant of $206,000 to build the rail trail from the Potter Place Railroad station to Danbury, a distance of about 8.5 miles. Construction on this third section is not expected until 2010.

More information is available at the Friends Web site at FNRT.org.

Conservation Corner

By Tina Cotton
Andover Conservation Commission

Two recent events – the fallout from the draft of the Webster-Highland Lakes Watershed Partnership consultants' report (see articles on pages 4 and 5) and the effects of not practicing Best Management Practices for logging upslope of Highland Lake after the heavy rains – raised the awareness of how fragile our water resources are. The old Yankee saying that I should be able to do whatever I want on my land really affects others when the population increases and land parcels become smaller.

Many towns and cities with a surface-water public water supply do not allow private housing, boating, swimming, or public access. Many of these lakes are surrounded by high fences and "No Trespassing" signs.

The Conservation Commission has been particularly concerned about maintaining the future water quality of Bradley Lake, currently the municipal water supply for "downtown" Andover and our public school. This summer was the first detected minor occurrence of *E. coli* bacteria in the water, even though the water district has a treatment plant.

The new Master Plan will have input from the Conservation Commission. We would like to see zoning changes implemented to protect the water quality of Bradley Lake from further development.

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Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway

The 13th Sunapee-Ragged-Kearsarge Greenway (SRKG) Coalition Walkabout continues every Saturday and Sunday through October 22. Hikes will usually begin at 8:30 AM on Saturdays, but later on Sundays. The leader will set the time and meeting place. All who plan to hike must call the leader by two nights before the hike to get instructions.

Hikers are advised to bring plenty to drink, particularly on hot, humid days, and should also bring sunscreen, a hat, and lunch or a snack. Many have found hiking poles to be helpful, particularly on the knees.

Please do not bring your dogs. Some of the landowners have requested this in their agreements with SRKG.

The SRKG is a 75-mile trail that links the peaks of Mount Sunapee, Ragged Mountain, and Mount Kearsarge, running through 10 area towns. For more information about the Greenway, visit SRKG.com.

SRK Greenway Walkabout 2006

Date	Begins At	Miles	Leader	Phone
Saturday Sep. 30	Sunapee Town Hall	5.9 Moderate	Ron Wyman	763-5822
Sunday Oct. 1	Deer Hill Road Springfield	4.2 Easy	Mike Chiarella	763-4661
Saturday Oct. 7	Route 114 Springfield	8.7 Difficult	Ken Aldrich	526-2942
Sunday Oct. 8	Pleasant Lake New London	3.3 Moderate	Ralph Spofford	526-6568
Saturday Oct. 14	Route 4A Bog Mountain, Wilmot	4.6 Moderate	Wayne Nicoll	735-5721
Sunday Oct. 15	Wilmot Center	4.1 Easy	Don Hinman	768-3398
Saturday Oct. 21	New Canada Road Danbury	6.4 Difficult	Brian Faughnan	526-7838
Sunday Oct. 22	Proctor Academy Andover	6.0 Moderate	Andy Hager	526-2846

Each hike ends where the next hike begins; the last hike ends at Winslow State Park on Mount Kearsarge, where the first hike began.

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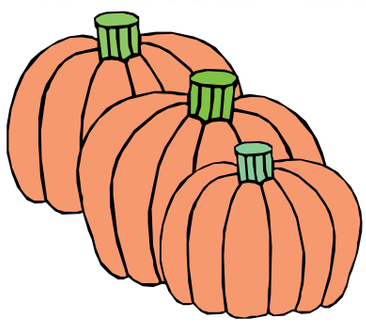

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