Town of Huntington Conservation Board Trail Guide
A Project Submission for a NYSACC Environmental Project Award

Summary of the Project

The Huntington Conservation Board has long been involved with the Town’s parks and trails system. A Park Stewardship Program was established several years ago. This program promotes the active volunteer involvement of concerned, responsible local citizens and groups. Its purpose is to assist the Department of Parks and Recreation to assure the protection, preservation, and safe use of designated parkland. These Town Board appointed volunteers serve as the “eyes, ears, and mouths” of our parks in the field. The program was conceived and is administered by the Conservation Board and has grown and grown over the years in both scope and size. At the present time there are about 250 stewards for the Town’s 150 active and passive parks. Park Stewardship meetings are held by the Conservation Board twice a year to offer programs of interest to stewards and include personal from key Town departments. For some years, a constant request has been made for trails guides for many of the actively hiked parks. We have tried to fulfill this request, but for many reasons were unsuccessful.

This summer, Town Councilman Stuart Besen took up the cause and provided the impetus for the creation of the Huntington Trail Guide, which features twenty of the Town’s parks. The Guide contains pertinent information detailing park locations, parking information, the length of the trail, as well as park amenities and educational opportunities. Maps and photographs, historical facts, information about the park or preserve that the trail is located in, and some of the flora and fauna to be discovered are included.

Key to successful completion of the Guide was the work of two marvelous summer interns, Elana Israel and David Kaufman, who were assigned by Councilman Besen and Supervisor Frank Petrone to the Department of Planning and Environment. They worked under the direction of Margo Myles, Coordinator of Open Space Conservation and Liaison to the Conservation Board, and Aidan Mallamo, GIS Supervisor.

Recognizing that trails must support multiple recreational purposes, including, walking, hiking, jogging, bicycling, horse riding, cross country skiing, orienteering, as well as educational and interpretive pursuits, in April the Town Board appointed a Huntington Greenway Trail Citizens Advisory Committee with a Conservation Board member included in the membership. This group, with the Conservation Board, provided suggestions and technical review as the project proceeded. So throughout the summer, the student interns worked, walking the trails using GIS equipment, taking notes on park needs, and documenting everything with photographs. They researched the history of the parks from Planning Department and Conservation Board files kept throughout the years.

By the end of the summer, the Guide was largely done. Copies were distributed at two fall festivals. Another printing was done by a local newspaper, the Times of Huntington, with the Guide being distributed to 10,000 of their subscribers. The Conservation Board
had collected funds for a trail guide from a prior March for Parks, which is providing additional funding. The guide is also available the Town’s website www.town.huntington.ny.us

At this fall’s Park Stewardship Meeting, the Trail Guide was distributed to delighted park stewards. This was the culmination of the long time longing for a true guide to some of our parks. What is next? With this excellent start, it is hoped that next summer more trails will be documented with another edition of the guide to be developed. There is a big message for Conservation Boards here. It is important to use interested groups, find a sponsor, assist Town staff in any way possible, employ the talents of interested, enthusiastic students when and if they become available, hunt them down. But most of all be tenacious and never give up on a project.

Who Did the Work

Leading and supervising the Huntington Trails Guide project, sharing ideas and information, guiding the interns, and reviewing their work were two key Department of Planning and Environment staff members. Margo Myles, Senior Environmental Analyst and Coordinator of Open Space Conservation was a former Conservation Board member. After joining the Town’s planning staff, she has for many years, served as liaison from Planning to the Conservation Board. Her guidance to this project and to the Conservation Board on all phases of activities has been invaluable. Aidan Mallamo, the Town’s GIS Supervisor guided use of the GPS system and insight into trail mapping. They directed the work of the summer interns.

Elana Israel is a student attending Green Mountain College in Poultney, Vermont. She is in her second year of Environmental Studies with an interest in water resources. She brought her keen interpretive sent to the project. Elana was the key author of the narrative for the Guide which involved researching park histories and data and compiling and synthesizing them into appealing text.

David Kaufman is in his third year at the University of Connecticut, majoring in Landscape Architecture. In his second year of interning with the Department of Planning and Environment, he brought prior experience working with the Town geographic information system and in developing landscape plans for park projects. His design and photography skills and botanical studies made a significant impact on the Guide. Together they learned how to use GPS and map trails and discover parks they had never known.

Costs

Since the summer interns were working directly for the Department of Planning and Environment as assigned by the Town Supervisor and a Councilman, salary costs were part of summer programming. Town staff involved added this project to their regular work.
Each color copy costs approximately one dollar. A first all-color printing was done for two fall festivals. The cost of the 10,000 mostly black and white copies, which were printed by the Times of Huntington, was $5000, which was a donation to the town. Additional copies will be printed with $400 raised by the Conservation Board during a prior March for Parks.

**Conservation Board**

In 1974 on Town Board adoption of the Open Space Index, the former Conservation Advisory Council, started in 1967, became a Conservation Board. It is a Town Board appointed volunteer advisory organization constituted pursuant to Article 12-F, section 239-Y of General Municipal Law. The Conservation Board reviews and provides comments to the Town Board, Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals on applications for land use change that have potential to affect Open Space Index-mapped property. The Board also reviews and comments on all applications received under the Marine Conservation Law. In addition to its advisory review functions, the Board serves as a conduit for conveying environmental information on key topic areas, such as land use and review, marine and freshwater resources, parks, solid waste, and legislation to Town leaders. In addition, the Board coordinates the volunteer Park Stewardship Program that aids the monitoring and management of Town parkland. The Conservation Board meets the first and third Tuesday of every month.

**Members include:**
Joy Squires, Chairperson
Paul Ponturo, Vice Chair
Scott Driver
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