

Community Conservation Corps Proposal

Draft #1 – For Discussion Only

Preserving more open space in our community, and providing community access to that open space, will create an increased need to manage and maintain these properties on a regular basis. Trails will need to be developed and maintained, natural resource inventories conducted, litter picked up, educational displays created and guided activities offered to people who would like to get out on these properties, but need a little guidance or direction in how to do so.

Fortunately, Falmouth is blessed with a very active citizenry. Many people in our town have demonstrated their willingness to volunteer their time and talents for a community cause, including the cause of conservation. The Conservation Commission had little trouble finding volunteers for its work with vernal pools and invasive species, and the Falmouth Land Trust uses a lot of volunteer help with the management of its Blackstrap Hill Preserve. Additionally, there are youth groups (e.g.–Scouts) always looking for community projects and a graduation requirement at the high school for community service. In short, there are plenty of people and groups who represent a large pool of volunteer labor who might be enlisted in the cause of conservation.

At a more existential level, our 21st century lifestyle often distances people, especially young people, from the natural world and often isolates them from their neighbors and community. Engaging people across the age, income and occupational spectrum in conservation projects would also significantly contribute to both people's understanding and appreciation of the natural world and their sense of community. Both are important in sustaining citizen commitment to environmental protection and in strengthening the invisible but essential web of human relationships that make a community strong and vibrant.

To address these needs, the Conservation Commission and its Open Space Implementation Subcommittee proposes the creation of a volunteer Community Conservation Corps. Key elements of the CCC would be as follows:

- People of all ages would be invited to participate on a voluntary basis, for as much or as little time as they can commit. A database of potential volunteers would be created, including notation of any special skills or interests individuals may have. The coordinator would work with youth organization leaders and the high school service learning coordinator make more tangible connections with those groups.
- Projects will be identified by a steering committee composed of Conservation Commission, Trails Committee, Parks Department, Public Works Department, Falmouth Land Trust and Open Space Implementation Subcommittee representatives. A work plan will then be developed for each identified project.
- External leaders may be recruited for a particular project, such as a botanist for plant inventory or a biologist for a nesting bird survey. A cadre of internal project leaders will be developed as individual CCC members with the requisite skills and commitment are identified.
- CCC members would be alerted via email to an upcoming project and would sign up according to their interest and availability. The town website could serve as the forum for publicizing CCC projects and as a place to sign up for a projects.

- An ongoing record will be kept of the various projects each CCC member worked on and the number of hours they were involved in that project. At the end of the year, awards or recognition of some kind would be given based on the amount of time donated. This will be especially important for high school students seeking community service credit.
- Safety training would be required for specific kinds of projects (e.g.–trailing clearing, river work). There are also insurance and liability concerns that would have to be addressed.
- Volunteers would provide much of the needed tools and equipment (shovels, saws, canoes, etc.) The town would have to provide some additional equipment, depending on the nature of the project, such as a truck or safety equipment (ear & eye protection, gloves).

Overall coordination of the CCC could become part of the open space ombudsman's responsibilities. Grant funds could be obtained to support the start up of this effort (advertising and promotion, coordinator time, supplies & materials, T-shirts, etc.).

CCC 2006-07 Work Plan		
Goal: Create a Community Conservation Corps by 1 Apr 2008.		
Objective	Activity	Timeline
1. Get OSIC and Conservation Commission approval and support for this idea.	1.1. OSIC & the FCC take the issue up at their September meetings.	13 Sep
2. Get policy maker approval for creating a Community Conservation Corps in Falmouth.	1.1. Meet and discuss draft proposal with town manager, key department heads, key committee chairs. Revise proposal as warranted.	30 Sep
	2.2. Meet and discuss draft #2 with the Council's Community Development Committee; revise as warranted.	15 Oct
	3.3. Submit a final proposal to the Council for approval.	30 Oct
	4.4. Get Council approval.	30 Nov
3. Create a CCC steering committee, as described in final proposal.	1.1. Write a Davis Conservation Foundation grant to get start up funds.	15 Dec
	2.2. Solicit participation of key individuals or their designees.	15 Dec
	3.3. Convene group, establish charter, roles, responsibilities, etc.	15 Jan
4. Identify priority projects for 2008 work year.	1.1. Steering committees generates options, prioritizes needs, selects target projects.	28 Feb
5. Establish a cadre of CCC volunteers.	1.1. Advertise the program, get media coverage, create a web page.	>1 Mar
	2.2. Enroll volunteers, convene informational meeting.	30 Apr
	3.3. Create a record keeping system.	15 May
6. Launch projects.	1.1. Bring it all together and start getting work done.	>Jun 1
	2.2. Publicize CCC activities as a recruitment tool.	Ongoing