

1. Town Land Stewardship

The Atkinson *land stewardship* program provides land management through continuity: that is, a single group or person can spot changes or needs within a particular area by watching the land over time. Land stewards also provide a point of contact for issues concerning the land in their charge: needed maintenance, questions from visitors, and proposals for improvement or maintenance.

Tasks:

- a. *Document and Record Management.* Conservation lands and trusts come to the town from public and private sources. There may be restrictions or special provisions in each of these grants. Record maintenance involves making sure that all the correct records and conditions for each grant are located and known. For example, the agreement may include use restrictions (no hunting or fishing, hiking only—no skiing or snowshoes, etc.). Easements, if any, should also be noted.
- b. *Documenting baseline conditions.* An initial survey may be made to assess the current state of the conservation area: condition of trails (if any), rough percentage of environments (dry meadow, upland forest, wetland, bog, swamp, vernal pool, etc.)
- c. *Monitor conditions.* Trail conditions, condition of boundary and trail markers, changing land conditions (for example, beavers create or increase wetland and pond), increase or decrease use, change in use (more special groups such as scouts or school outings), and so on.
- d. *Report or repair damage.* The land steward is authorized to make repairs to small trail or land damage, such as minor brush and leaf clearance, blocked stream flow, or other conditions. If more major work (heavy tree down and blocking trail, rut or runoff damage) or environmental hazard (petroleum odor in stream) is detected, the land steward can contact the town office or conservation commission for assistance in investigation or repair.
- e. Be a contact for questions on the area, from visitors, town officials, or other interested parties. In addition to the documents mentioned above, the land steward will have a supply of maps and general information about the area as these become available.

2. Trails

The *Trail Maintenance* program involves administration and maintenance of existing trail systems. This responsibility is held jointly by the land steward and trail maintenance personnel. However, trail personnel are responsible for all trails in the town (the land steward is only responsible for their area), and trail personnel deal only with the trail system, not the entire conservation area.

Tasks:

- a. Inventory of existing trails and documentation.
- b. Organization and maintenance of trail records (permits, improvements, maintenance costs)
- c. Maintenance of trails
- d. Trail signage and boundary markers.
- e. Development/improvement and distribution of trail documentation
- f. Trail publicity

In addition, the Conservation Commission is always looking for assistance with the following duties:

3. Publicity

- a. Press releases and special bulletins on conservation-related activities, both in Atkinson and statewide. (For example, the annual state conservation meeting might be of interest to town residents.)
- b. Coverage of both ongoing and special projects/events. Documenting and writing articles on projects and events when completed help publicize conservation activities in the town.
- c. Development of town-controlled information channels, such as town newsletters, web site, and cable TV. Articles and programs for these information channels can be developed.
- d. Special media development: person with skills and resources to develop displays, posters, electronic graphics, and other specialized material are especially needed. Displays and posters in the Town Hall and other public facilities help get word to Atkinson residents of activities and conservation services available. They are also useful for presentation at public hearings and meetings.

4. Land Protection

- a. Acquisition of land and/or conservation easements
- b. Community outreach and education
- c. Natural resource inventory and documentation

5. Special Projects and Grants

- a. *Grant research*: appropriate funding may be available from UNH, LCHIP, and other state, federal, and private institutions.
- b. *Grant writing*: grant writing is an art and special skill. Grants must not only be written in a manner that helps award selection, but also must be an *achievable* and *appropriate* goal. For example, development and maintenance of mountain trails and cliff guard rails would be inappropriate, but improvement of handicap access would be appropriate.
- c. *Grant status reporting and completion reports*: Completing essential status and closing reports is a vital part of grant management. Not only does it give a record of what was done for the town, it establishes a reputation (and reference resource for future grants) that helps to establish Atkinson as a good steward of conservation funds.