

North County Land Trust & Montachusett Opportunity Council, Inc.

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Local Youth Work on Conservation Land

This summer has been a productive one on the Crocker Conservation Area in Fitchburg. North County Land Trust, Inc. has sponsored the work of five local teens, to maintain and construct trails on its 150-acre conservation property near Overlook Reservoir. Led by Stewardship Coordinator, Christopher Reed, the crew has constructed over 1 mile of new trails on Crocker Conservation Area since it began work on July 1st.

Three of the workers are participants in Montachusett Opportunity Council's Youth Works Program, which provides part-time job placements for eligible teens. Coryanne Ash directed the program this summer and says "MOC Youth Services is very happy about the work opportunity provided by the land trust. Chris was great with the crew and they got a lot out of the experience."

This is the first year the land trust has had a summer work program. Principal funding for the program was provided by Red Line Wall Systems, Inc., a construction company based in Leominster. President, Brian Cote, is a strong supporter of jobs and work experience for youth. "I think it went great this summer," said Mr. Cote. "The kids worked hard and developed new skills. They even learned to use a GPS system, and plotted out points to map out that new trail they built. We'd love to expand the program. It just seems like a good idea for everyone. When private businesses partner up with service agencies, together we can get young people useful and productive work experience. Chris and the kids did the hard work. Chris took this idea on from the beginning and really built up a great program. It was a good learning experience for all of us. We had the easy part – we just donated the money to support the work. We'll definitely do it again next year."

In addition to their work on the Crocker Conservation Area, the crew has done clean up and trail work at Overlook and Marshall Reservoirs, where the land trust holds a conservation restriction. This summer, the Fitchburg Water Department has provided access to the reservoirs and general support for the land trust's work.

The work crew has also ventured out to provide support for other clean-up efforts in the city. They spent several days clearing brush and trash from a wooded area near B.F. Brown Middle School on Elm Street.

There was even an opportunity to learn some local history. The crew's most recent job has been at Fitchburg's historic TOWN Pound on Ashburnham Hill Road. The Town Pound was used in the nineteenth century to secure straying farm animals until their owners could claim them. It was formerly owned by Mr. and Mrs. Bigelow Crocker, who restored the wooded gateway to the pound. The Town Pound is now part of the Crocker Conservation Area. The crew is cleaning up the Town Pound in preparation for the construction of a trailhead there.

Janet Morrison, Executive Director of North County Land Trust commented, "It has been a great summer for us on the Crocker Conservation Area. Chris Reed and the work crew did a fantastic job, accomplishing a lot of work that would not otherwise have been done. The new trails will enhance the public's enjoyment of the conservation area. We've been able to forge a good working relationship with the Fitchburg Water Department that will help to keep the trails at Overlook Reservoir open to the public. And we've provided a good educational and work experience for some kids. We're very proud of the work they've done."