Lake Winnisquam Scenic Trail

What’s Happening?

After 15 years of planning, construction of Phase 1 of Belmont’s Lake Winnisquam Scenic Trail, a paved multi-purpose trail is ready to begin on October 20. This 1.8 mile section of trail will connect to the planned extension of the WOW Trail in Laconia. The long range plan is to have a trail that will connect communities from Meredith to Franklin and link to the 58-mile Northern Rail Trail which reaches from Lebanon to Concord. Funding for this project came largely through federal highway funds with matching Town funds, other grants and contributions.

Where’s the Trail Located? The Lake Winnisquam Scenic Trail begins on Leslie E. Roberts Drive near the Belmont Town Beach and will connect to the planned extension of the WOW Trail to the east at the Laconia town line. Heading to the west, the Winni Trail will follow Horse Point Road onto State conservation land originally planned for the Laconia By-Pass to I-93 on the slope behind Belknap Mall. Through a purchase of land by the Town Conservation Commission with assistance of the Rotary Club and a series of other easements, the 1.8 mile trail route follows along the slope and then parallels the railroad tracks near Sun Lake Village with great lake views and then turns inland on the west side of Osbourne’s Agway at the Daniel Webster Highway.

Who Do We Need to Thank? Ron Mitchell had the initial vision for Belmont’s Trail and led the effort. The Town Selectmen and Belmont residents approved funds to design and build the trail. The State Department of Transportation and adjacent landowners granted trail easements. These landowners include: Osbourne’s Agway, Ronald & Marsha Wagner, Danny Dunn & Tanya Rapter, Chin Way Eng, Sun Lake Village, Piche’s. Special thanks to Bob Bolduc of Piche’s, Ronald & Marsha Wagner, and Phil Brouillard of Sun Lake Village who donated their easements and the Belmont Conservation Commission who provided funding to purchase the McGrath parcel for the trail. Tom Jameson, our State Dept of Transportation Project Manager provided sound advice and support.

Trail Construction – Nelson Communications Services, Inc. (NCS) of Center Conway was awarded the contract to construct the trail. Work is scheduled to begin on October 20th and will be completed during the spring next year. HEB Engineering will provide oversight to ensure that the trail is done to standard. The Louis Berger Group designed the trail and prepared it for approval by the State Department of Transportation. Construction cost for this phase is $726,278 with an additional $99,012 for construction engineering. Design engineering cost $188,000 and $16,625 was paid for right-of-way acquisition.

Next Steps – We need to grow our Belmont Trail Committee and a Winni Trail Friends Group to cover all the opportunities this Trail provides local residents and visitors. Some of the activities we would like to explore include:

- Fund-raising and partnering to create Trail benches, a trail-side picnic area, information kiosks, native wild flower plantings, signing to interpret the area’s natural and cultural history, and more
- Work with adjacent businesses on access trails to connect them to the Winni Trail
- Coordination with the WOW Trail and local businesses on a new Trail Map, and signing. Find volunteers or organizations to “adopt” the Trail and help maintain segments of the Trail.
• Coordinate with potential trail user groups to identify their interests and schedule events and activities on the trail working with the Town Recreation Department, Town Events Coordinator, Schools, Seniors and Scout groups and others.

• Explore ideas such groomed cross country trail use of trail in winter, bicycle safety checks and health and fitness activities associated with the trail. Develop a list of potential scout projects, outdoor class room and learning opportunities. Begin work on next phase of Trail.