

**Township of Franklin
Trails Advisory Committee**

2009 Annual Report

Pathways and Trails: Connecting Franklin's Diverse Communities



**Prepared by the
Trails Advisory Committee
2010 Members**

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Trails Advisory Committee Annual Report for Calendar Year 2009

Over 53 miles of trails—not including the many miles of paved multi-use paths such as those along Easton Avenue, Cedar Grove Lane or JFK Boulevard, are now located in Franklin Township¹. Recognizing the growing number of trails and trail-users, the Township Council took action, when the Trails Advisory Committee (TAC) was formed as a result of Ordinance No. 3513, adopted on December 14, 2004. That ordinance establishes the purpose of the TAC:

A Township of Franklin Trails Advisory Committee is hereby established to involve trail users and Township residents in advising Township departments, the Township Manager and Township Council on issues related to trail acquisition, design, maintenance and use.

It further describes the TAC’s mission:

The Township of Franklin Trails Advisory Committee is advisory to the Mayor, Township Manager and Township Council and makes recommendations to promote, protect and assist in development of enjoyable, safe, convenient trail opportunities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians throughout the Township of Franklin planning area.

And the TAC’s duties are described as follows:

1. *Identifying current and future trail interests and needs of the community;*
2. *Identifying trail opportunities and options during development review and analyzing alternatives for maximum potential benefit;*
3. *Making recommendations to the Township Council on trail policies and design issues;*
4. *Making recommendations on acquisition and development of trail facilities and trail use;*

¹ Trail lengths (in some cases, estimated)

	Township	State	County	Total
BHNA/FPNA	3.52			
D&R CANAL		23		
GRIGGSTOWN	5.4			
BUTLER ROAD	3.53			
NEGRI-NEPOTE	2.83			
INMAN PARK	2			
COLONIAL PARK (estimated)			3	
SIX MILE RUN (estimated)		<u>10</u>		
	17.28	33	3	53.28

5. *Conducting trail surveys for maintenance and safety recommendations;*
6. *Reviewing and commenting on public and private development actions to promote trail interest; and*
7. *Other related duties.*

Finally, it states:

The Committee shall maintain regular communications with the Township Manager and Council to share information and pursue joint interests. The Committee shall report annually to the Township Council on accomplishments and issues for the future.

Accordingly, this *Annual Report* has been prepared.

Goals and Objectives for 2009.

The TAC members approved the following goals for 2009:

1. Adoption of *Pathways and Trails Plan*
2. Development of volunteer programs, specifically Friends of Franklin Township Trails and Adopt-A-Trail.
3. Identifying Funding for Trails.

Adoption of the Pathways and Trails Plan.

On February 8, 2009, the *Pathways and Trails Plan* was adopted by the Planning Board as an Element of the Township's Master Plan; it can be found on the township's website at: http://www.franklintwpnj.org/TAC_Final_PTP_Dec%2019%202008.pdf. This document can now be utilized to guide township officials in planning pathways and trails throughout the township.

Adopt-A-Trail Program.

The *Pathways and Trails Plan* includes a recommendation regarding the Adopt-a-Trail program:

An Adopt-a-Trail program should be implemented by the Township. This program would involve getting citizen volunteers and or volunteer organizations (scout troops, civic organizations, etc.) to adopt a specific trail and to thereby agree to periodically walk and inspect the trail and conduct litter clean-up, debris removal, minor pruning of bushes and to report any need for additional work, such as fallen tree removal, that may have to be performed by the Township's Public Works staff. Implementing this program could be done by utilizing the

existing resources that are devoted to open space—the Township’s Open Space Consultant, NJ Audubon Society and the Township’s Public Works Department.

To implement this, the TAC started the Adopt-A-Trail program in June. To date, 67 people have expressed interest in the program and 40 have signed up as volunteers. In June, as part of National Trails Day, initial activities were organized at five trail locations:

- *Negri-Nepote Native Grassland Preserve.* John Clyde, Coordinator, had 4 volunteers. Group was split, branches were cut, weeds around observation deck removed. Group reported many ruts in ground. Two full bags of trash.
- *Inman Park.* Nicki Newby, Coordinator, had 3 volunteers. In general single track trail in good shape. More markers are needed. Not much trash. Down tree required small go around. Brook crossing might need to be changed.
- *Bunker Hill Natural Area.* Jack Connolly and Frank McLaughlin, Coordinators, had 3 volunteers. Tall grass needs to be cleaned out around benches and bike rack. Gate chain broken. Small amount of trash removed. Volunteers anxious to do more.
- *Griggstown Native Grassland Preserve—part of the Ten Mile Run Greenway.* Dom Abbatiello and Pat Leonard, Coordinators, had 4 volunteers. Yellow trail (pipeline) needs work: deep grooves from water run off. Brown trail very wet and rough with stones, suggest brown markers be changed to different color they blend in with tree bark and hard to see or put another color marker under the brown what would stand out better. Tree fall blocking marked trail put temporary go around.
- *Butler Road Natural Area.* Mark Fortin, Coordinator had 3 volunteers. Some trail markers missing. Due to rain some stream crossings were difficult. Some down trees reported. One bag of trash removed.

Throughout the rest of the year, the TAC coordinators led several additional walks on each of their adopted trails.

Finally, on two occasions, November 7 and December 5, two Mega-Clean-ups were organized at the Butler Road Natural Area. On November 7, over 20 people participated and three large dumpsters were filled with garbage. On December 5, 13 people participated and two more dumpsters were filled with garbage. Another several days will still be needed to finish the cleanup of this area.

The Phil Marden Preserve and the North-South connector trail.

The *Pathways and Trails Plan*, an Element of the Master Plan, calls for a multi-use path to be constructed, beginning at the Marden Preserve, heading west toward South Middlebush Road and then heading south, roughly paralleling South Middlebush Road. This path, if ever constructed, would be constructed entirely on property that is owned as open space by Franklin Township, on property owned by the State (Six Mile Run

Reservoir Site) or in right-of-way along So. Middlebush Road. In 2008, representatives of the township met with DEP officials and discussed the proposed path. Although the officials present at the meeting could not commit the State to the project, they gave every indication that they thought that the project was worth pursuing. The township representatives advised those present that the township was in the process of developing the *Pathways and Trails Plan* and when completed, along with township approval certain aspects of the Plan's recommendations, the township would get back in touch with the DEP to pursue next steps.

On December 8, 2009, the Township Council held a public hearing on the first part of this proposed pathway—the portion through the Marden Preserve. After the public hearing, the Council voted to support pursuing DEP approval and funding for the development of this proposed pathway. This will likely become a priority of the TAC in 2010.

2010 Recreational Trails Grant.

In December, the township, after receiving a recommendation from the TAC, applied for a \$25,000.00 Trails Grant from the DEP. The grant application, applies for funding of a multi-purpose, handicapped accessible path in the Middlebush Park on DeMott Lane.

2006 Recreational Trails Grant.

The township applied for and received a \$25,000.00 Trails Grant from the DEP under the 2006 funding round. The grant can be used for a pedestrian bridge to be constructed over the Ten Mile Run stream. This bridge would complete a more than six-mile long trail that begins in Griggstown at the Griggstown Native Grassland Preserve and ends at the Franklin Park Natural Area (formerly the Catalpa property) located on South Middlebush Road in Franklin Park.

Numerous impediments have arisen in attempting to get this bridge constructed—the greatest being the stream location literally changed course--such that the original location for the proposed bridge had to be changed. The only acceptable location is now located on Ten Mile Run Homeowner's Association-owned open space. The TAC and the OSAC have both been supportive of efforts to negotiate an easement with the Association and in December, the Association approved, in concept, granting the needed easement to the township. Getting this easement and then getting this bridge constructed will be major objectives in 2010.

Trails Use Ordinance.

The TAC recognized that there was no single place where residents could easily see what uses were or were not permitted on each trail. Accordingly, the township council,

upon the recommendation of the TAC, adopted an ordinance that established a single repository for this information. The trail use chart is available on the township's website at http://www.franklintwpnj.org/Trails_permitted_uses.pdf. It is also attached hereto as Appendix 1.

Trail maps.

The township provides information about trails and their uses in several ways.

- Five-thousand "Things to Do in Franklin" eco-heritage tourism maps were produced in 2006; an additional 5,000 copies of an updated version were produced in 2008. This roadmap-sized publication shows the location of all known trails in the township. These maps are available from the Township Clerk, are available on the township's website at <http://www.franklintwpnj.org/eco-heritage-tourism.html> and they are stocked at six eagle-scout-constructed kiosks at trail heads located throughout the township. Approximately 2000 maps are distributed each year.
- Specific trail maps for four major township trail systems were originally produced in 2006. An updated version was produced in 2009. These are available on the township's website at http://www.franklintwpnj.org/detailed_trail_maps.html and copies of these maps are available at the respective trail head.

TAC Vacancies.

There are two vacancies on the TAC. The Ordinance establishing the TAC states:

Committee members shall be appointed upon the basis of demonstrated interest in, knowledge of, and support for trails for recreation and transportation purposes. Members shall serve without salary or other compensation. Prior to appointing initial members and filling each vacancy in the membership of the Committee, public notice of available positions shall be provided to the news media at least two weeks in advance of appointment. Applicants for vacant positions shall apply to the Township Manager. Consideration should be given to appointments that result in a broad geographic and demographic representation of interested and knowledgeable people. Appointments should also strive to reflect the diverse trail use interests of the community, such as walking, jogging, skating, bicycling and horseback riding.

The current members generally reflect the diverse trail use interests of the community, in that members currently serving use trails for walking, bicycling and/or horseback riding. However, joggers, and skaters are not currently represented on the committee.

TAC members currently live in the following communities in the township: Griggstown, Franklin Park and Somerset.

Staffing support to the TAC.

The township has retained the services of John Loos as a Land Preservation Consultant and Loos has been assigned by the Township Manager to provide staff assistance to the TAC. Additional support is provided by the township's Engineering Office--Karen Buckley provides administrative support and Tom Zilinek, Carl Hauck, Scott Thomas and Maureen Sturgeon provide engineering and surveying support. Finally, the Public Works Department provides assistance for trail maintenance, generally done on overtime on Saturdays or by two temporary summer staff who were hired in 2009 for about six weeks.

Funding for Trails.

All funding for the trails program comes out of the township's Open Space Trust Fund or from grants obtained from other sources.

Appendix 1

Permitted Trail Uses

(√ means this use is permitted, otherwise, the use is prohibited)

Trail Location	Trail	Walking	Cross-country skis	Equestrian (permit required)	Bicycles	Snow-shoes	Dogs on leash	Handicapped accessible
Bunker Hill Natural Area	Yellow	√	√			√	√	
	Blue	√	√			√	√	
	Red	√	√			√	√	
Bunker Hill Environmental Education Center	All	√	√			√		
Butler Road Natural Area	Red	√	√	√	√	√	√	
	Purple	√	√	√	√	√	√	
	Orange/Yellow	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Franklin Park Natural Area	Brown	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Griggstown Native Grassland Preserve	Blue	√	√	√		√		
	Red	√	√	√		√		
	Orange	√	√	√		√	√	
	Yellow	√	√	√		√	√	
	Brown	√	√	√		√	√	
Memorial Forest	All	√	√	√		√	√	
Negri-Nepote Native Grassland Preserve	Purple	√	√			√		√
	Yellow	√	√			√		
	Brown	√	√			√		
	Red	√	√			√		