**VI. Property Maintenance Plan**

**A. Annual Inspection**

The Conservation Commission will annually inspect every Greenbelt Trail to determine if it meets basic safety and usability standards. Additionally, the Commission solicit and follow-up on pertinent comments from the public and Town officials related to the condition or suggested improvements to trails.

**B. Annual Maintenance Plan**

 **Routine Maintenance**

The Conservation Commission will prepare an Annual Maintenance Plan focusing on vegetation management of greenbelt trails, especially where vegetation continually overgrows trail surfaces and closes off trail corridors. It will determine the nature, frequency and priority of remedial action necessary to properly maintain these areas. The Commission will then coordinate with the Public Works Department to determine how much maintenance the Department of Public Works has the resources to assume for that year. Where maintenance needs exceed Public Works Department resources, the Conservation Commission will consider contracting out services within existing budget limitations and volunteer labor.

In addition to annual maintenance conducted by the Department of Public Works, the Conservation Commission will continue to perform vegetation management and placement of signage as their time allows.

 **Repairs/improvements**

The Conservation Commission will also prepare a list of non-annual repairs and improvements needed on Greenbelt Trails and informal town open space. The Commission's list will be in priority order with safety issues identified as the most critical. The next order of priority will be problems located on heavily used trails that seriously compromise use.

The Commission will then coordinate the work to make the improvements as follows:

1. Department of Public Works. The Commission will coordinate with the Department of Public Works to determine the resources the department can devote to the project list. For example, the Department of Public Works installed all the piers supporting the Spurwink River bridge and boardwalk.

2. Private contractors. Some projects require skills or specialized equipment that are not typically available in the Department of Public Works. The Commission will determine when contracting out work is needed to complete a project. For example, the Conservation Commission contracted out the installation of the Great Pond boardwalk to Great Northern Docks.

3. Volunteer Labor. When appropriate, the Conservation Commission will commit to completing a project, and may also solicit volunteers. For example, the Conservation Commission designed and built the Great Pond Boat Racks.

4. Budget. Where a project has costs that exceed the annual budget, the Conservation Commission will describe the problem, assess the consequences of not addressing the situation promptly and obtain an estimated cost for the work.

It should be noted that it is common for greenbelt improvement projects to include a combination of all of the above.

 **Preserves**

Several town open space parcels have been designated as “preserves” in this management plan. Most of these areas are relatively small and significantly encumbered by wetlands. These parcels are also often isolated from other town open space parcels. Nevertheless, they can be valuable to the immediate neighborhood as a natural area, wildlife habitat, flood control or a landscape buffer.

Preserves would not be formally maintained. At some future date, the designation of a preserve may be changed if the installation of greenbelt trails becomes desirable.

 **Maintenance by Others**

There are several parcels included in this management plan that include a mix of formal uses and greenbelt trails. On these parcels, this plan focuses on the greenbelt trails only. For example, Fort Williams is overseen by the Fort Williams Advisory Committee and athletic fields are scheduled by the Athletic Director. This management plan does not address parcels or facilities for which formal management entities already exist. Existing facilities and open spaces that are already formally managed include the following:

•Athletic Fields

•Land Trust properties

•School Campus

•Fort Williams

•Other Town lands

**C. Encroachment**

Encroachment by abutting property owners onto adjacent undeveloped land, including town owned land, is not uncommon. The Town Council has suggested that a more proactive approach to encroachments be part of the management of town owned land.

When an encroachment is suspected, it is difficult to take remedial steps without a professional boundary survey that locates the property boundary in the field. A proactive approach also requires the services of a professional surveyor.

The annual management of town open space should include funding for a professional surveyor to locate the boundaries of town open space with the Conservation Commission. One-tenth of the open space/boundaries should be inspected each year with the goal to completely review all boundaries within 10 years.

Following the inspection and before the location of the boundary is lost, boundaries that appear vulnerable to encroachment should be clearly marked with fencing, boulders, or other technique that is resistant to casual removal.

**D. Volunteers**

The Conservation Commission members are town residents appointed by the Town Council and donate hundreds of hours each year to trail maintenance. In addition, the town maintains a list of resident volunteers (33) who helped during trail work day events. There are also a few town residents who have volunteered to informally “adopt-a-trail” and perform unsupervised maintenance as there time permits.