

Excellence in Conservation Award Nomination:

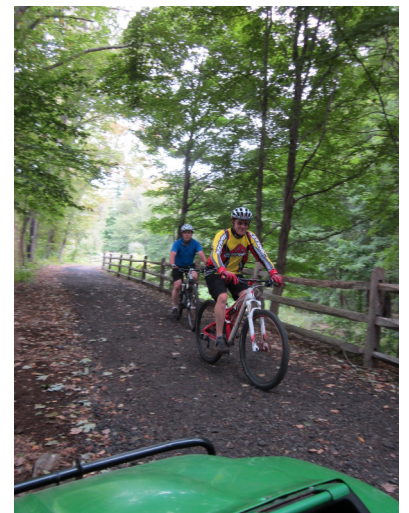
Organization: Shelton Conservation Commission & its Trails Committee
Project Name: Shelton Lakes Recreation Path and Greenway
Project started: 1992
Project completed: October 6, 2012 (Grand Opening)
Contact: Teresa Gallagher, Conservation Agent 203 924-1555 x315

Project Overview: The Shelton Lakes Recreation Path (“Rec Path”) is a four-mile long handicapped-accessible multi-use trail that connects the two primary town centers of downtown Shelton and Huntington Center through a newly created 450+ acre corridor of open space called the Shelton Lakes Greenway. Features of the greenway include 11 miles of interconnecting trails (including restoration of the Paugussett “Blue Dot” Trail), three reservoirs, the Eklund Native Species Garden, and a dog park. The Shelton Lakes Greenway

provides linkage with Shelton’s Housatonic River Greenway and Far Mill River Greenway for maximum ecological and recreational benefits. The Rec Path allows greenway access to people of all physical abilities.

Unique challenges: In 1992, most of the land needed was privately owned. About two dozen properties were proactively acquired over a span of twenty years to create the linear greenway which now totals more than 450 acres. It was especially difficult finding and preserving a handicapped-accessible route for the Rec Path with grades of less than 8 percent through some of the roughest terrain in Fairfield County. Although the leadership and membership of the Commission changed substantially over the years, the relentless pursuit of the overall goals for the Greenway and the Rec Path did not waver.

Due to funding limitations, the Rec Path was constructed in increments and temporarily surfaced in crushed stone rather than asphalt. Plans to pave the path were abandoned after many users voiced a preference for the stone surface. Volunteers completed as much work as possible, including design work, permitting, bridge construction, clearing, and even grading in some locations. As a result, construction costs averaged just \$151,000 a mile, which is a fraction of what a multiuse path usually cost (generally about \$1,000,000/mile)

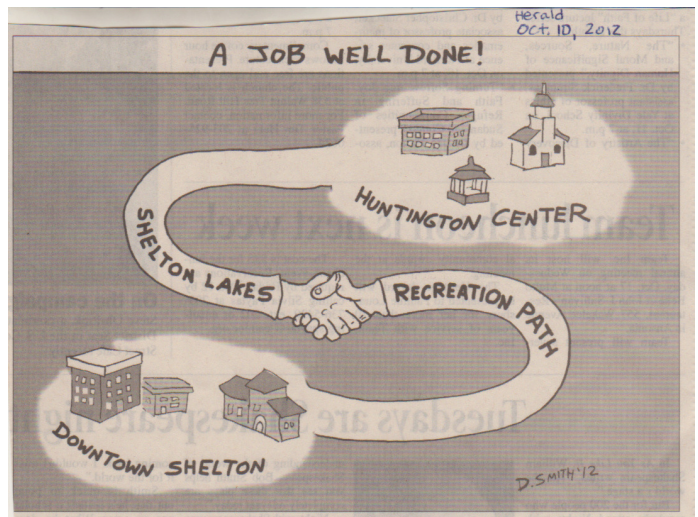


Background: The project was proposed in 1992 and formalized in the Open Space Plan of 1993 in response to the imminent sale of surplus water company land. At that time, most of the land needed for the future Greenway and Rec Path route were privately held by numerous landowners, and developmental pressures were very high. Builders had plans for a 210-unit condominium complex on one end of the route and a 400-unit housing complex and gas station on the other end where the water company land was located.

Emphasis during the first ten years of the project was on building support for the plan and the purchase of open space. The last ten years were focused on obtaining construction grants and building the Rec Path, which was completed in 2012. Thirteen grants totaling \$428,177 were received.

Building Public Support: Because the Conservation Commission is an advisory body only, great efforts were made to persuade City leaders, land use boards, civic groups, the Shelton Land Trust, and the residents of Shelton to support the greenway goals of the Commission. Public outreach began with meetings and newspaper articles, and expanded to the Internet with a Shelton Trails website in 1995, a Conservation website in 2006, and a Trails Committee blog and Conservation Facebook page in 2009. The success in using trail volunteers and bringing in multiple grants was key in developing widespread support for the greenway system, and over the years Shelton residents began to voice pride in their volunteers and open space program.

Conservation Commission website: www.sheltonconservation.org
Trails Committee blog: www.sheltontrailscom.blogspot.com



Shelton Lakes Recreation Path

Multi-use trail open to
bikes, walking, horses
No motorized vehicles
4.1 miles



Keep to the right
Pass on the Left
Dogs on leash

Download this map
at sheltonconservation.org
Shelton Conservation Commission