



Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET

SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

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OPEN SPACE STEWARDSHIP AND POLICES WORK GROUP

February 28, 2022

3:30 P.M.

Virtual Meeting Only

SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

Call to Order

1. Minutes from January 5, 2022 Meeting
2. Discussion on Open Space Rangers Program
3. Discussion on Using an Intern to Make Open Space Website Updates
4. Oral Report on Ag Lease RFP Update

Adjournment

Open Space Stewardship & Policies Work Group
Wednesday, January 5, 2022
4:30 PM- Via Zoom Video Conference
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT

PRESENT: Margery Winters and Susan Masino

ALSO PRESENT: Tom Tyburski, Director of Culture, Parks and Recreation and Zoning Compliance Officer, Tom Hazel, and Orlando Casiano, Parks Superintendent were also in attendance.

Call to Order

Ms. Winters called the meeting to order at 4:32 PM

1. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the October 13, 2021 Open Space subcommittee workgroup meeting were accepted.

2. Discussion on ARPA Funding for Open Space

Ms. Masino shared that she has been collecting information from the Working Lands Alliance and other items that they have had on the agenda for ideas that might fit within the guidelines for the ARPA funding as health and well-being is one of the criteria. Ms. Winters asked if there were ARPA funds available or they had to apply? Mr. Wellman shared that they have approximately seven and a half million dollars and that there is an ARPA work group basically figuring out how to spend this money. He suggested any ideas should be forwarded on to this workgroup.

3. Discussion on Open Space Rangers Program

Ms. Masino discussed Ridgefield's Ranger program that is run out of their Conservation Commission. She stated that it is very successful and is not costly. Ms. Masino stated she has already spoken to the Scout Troop that meets at First Church right next to Belden Forest and they are on board and would be a good fit for that property. She shared that she would like to get this program going this year and stated that Mr. Levine is willing to do a presentation at one of their meetings. Ms. Winters will reach out to St. Mary's to see which troop meets there and Ms. Masino will reach out to see who uses Onion Mountain. The documents Ms. Masino obtained from the Ridgefield program will be distributed and they will get a consensus from the whole Open Space Committee at the next meeting and she will ask Mr. Levine to do the presentation then.

4. Discussion on Habitat Maintenance Program

Ms. Winters discussed meadow mowing practices. Mr. Tyburski stated that they subcontract out some of the open space mowing and their contractor's main concern is getting stuck. Mr. Tyburski stated they are trying to mow as late as possible such as after the first frost. Ms. Winters suggested they start thinking about mowing every other year or half the field or identifying which fields are going to be mowed at what time. She stated that this type of mowing practice will involve some public education as it may come across as unkempt, however mowing every year decimates the insect population. Ms. Winters stated she would like to

identify which fields are mowed when. Mr. Tyburski shared that Mr. Casiano came up with a sign they are going to start putting up around these places stating "it's a no mow zone". Mr. Tyburski stated the Committee formalizing something would be great that way they can point people to the education piece.

5. Discussion on Invasive Plant Removal Practices

Ms. Winters stated that invasive plants are a huge issue for open spaces, she questioned how they should prioritize what areas need to be addressed and if they wanted to come up with a plan. Mr. Casiano stated that in the Parks Dept. they are going to make the extra effort in these smaller areas when they see it, he stated that invasive are a major issue that didn't happen overnight and they aren't going to be able to get rid of it overnight, it is going to take a lot of help from volunteers. A community wide day to assist with the removal was discussed. Ms. Masino also suggested that once invasives are remove they also need a plan for maintaining it.

Ms. Masino asked if Mr. Tyburski was given an advisory guide on invasives as part of the Open Space Master Plan. Mr. Tyburski will look into it.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Heather Taylor
Committee Clerk

Hello Rangers!

Often, I talk to friends and neighbors about our trails and open spaces and people really seem to have no idea what the RCC does, and especially how invaluable Ridgefield's Rangers are. We rely on you to know the condition of our trails and open spaces. My goal is to expand the Ranger Program and bring more (town-wide) attention to our Rangers. I fully understand that people's lives get busy and commitments change, so the first thing is to find out if you would still like to be a Ranger, or if you would like to be removed from the list. Before you answer, let me list how I plan on making the Ranger communications very simple and easy.

First of all, as you know, the Ranger Responsibilities are:

1. Walk a trail (or open space) at least 4 times per year (just 4 times!!!)
2. Keep trails free of any debris or litter (if you are able)
3. Be on the lookout for any damage
4. Check to see if trails are clearly marked
5. Communicate to the RCC with your comments

To make this easy, I have created a special email address – just for Rangers – where you can send you notes. From the received emails, I'll update our files (on the status of each trail) and we will take into account any and all of your observations (only Rangers will have this email address). This email address is RidgefieldRangers@gmail.com (the email address that I am contacting you from).

Even if your trail is in perfect shape, it would be such a help to hear that as well! A simple email like: "April 15, walked the trail, all looks good!" – helps us to know the conditions. Never any need to fill out a report, just a brief email (to me at this email address) and I will update our "trail files".

To review:

All you have to do is hike your trail (at least) 4 times per year, email us, and that is it!! Being a ranger is a perfect way to give back. You are helping our community maintain an invaluable resource - nature!

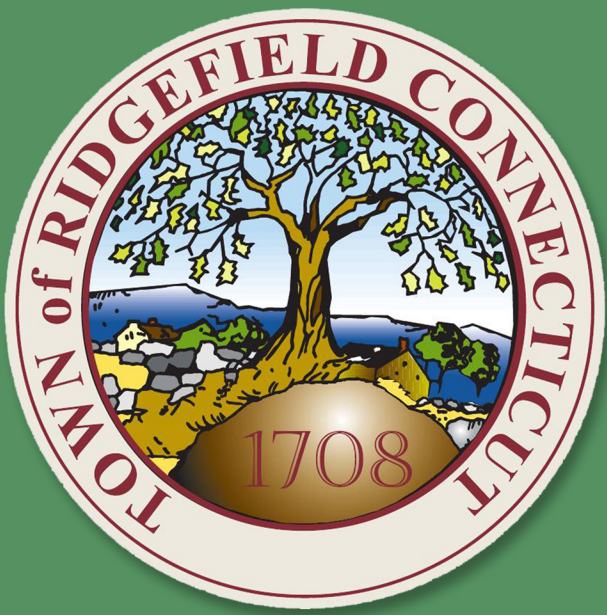
Please let me know if you feel you can still serve as a Ranger, and I will update our list.

We are also looking to implement "Ranger Families" to our list - where a family serves as "Ranger". If you are interested in becoming a Ranger Family, please indicate that.

As I mentioned, we are looking for ways to increase our Ranger list, so if you want to forward this email to anyone else that you think would be interested, please do so. Also, if you have any suggestions about how we can improve our program or ideas for other ways we might recruit more Rangers, please let us know that too.

I look forward to hearing back from you.

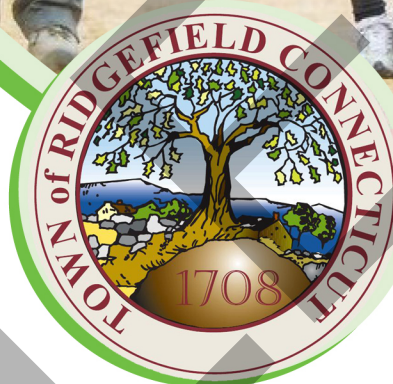
Daniel C. Levine



If you love the outdoors and value Ridgefield's incredible open spaces, being a Ranger might be for you!

Become a *Ranger*

With minimal time commitment, just walk your favorite trail, observe, and communicate to the Town of Ridgefield Conservation Commission.



The Town of Ridgefield
Conservation Commission

Ranger
Program

203-431-2713

RidgefieldRangers@gmail.com

66 Prospect St., Ridgefield, CT 06877

www.ridgefield.org



The Job of a Ranger

- » Walk a trail (or trails) at least 4 times per year.
- » Keep trails free of any debris
- » Be on the lookout for any damage, impassible areas, or evidence of any violation.
- » Communicate to the Town of Ridgefield Conservation Commission with your observations and comments.
- » Encourage friends and neighbors to appreciate Ridgefield's valuable open spaces and trails!

Support our community while enjoying the beauty of our local natural environment. Volunteer today!

203-431-2713

RidgefieldRangers@gmail.com

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So to review:

All you have to do is hike your trail (at least) 4 times per year, email us, and that is it!! Being a ranger is a perfect way to give back. You are helping our community maintain an invaluable resource - nature!

The attached letter is one of our "older" Ranger responsibility documents. Please DO NOT feel that you have to complete all of the duties listed!!!! All we expect and require is what is listed above!

Thank you.

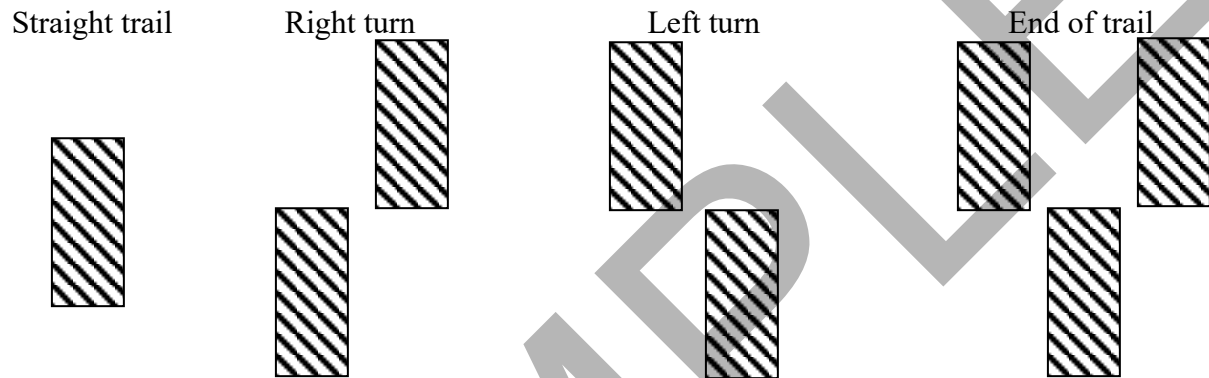
Daniel C. Levine
Ridgefield Conservation Commission

Trail Blazing 101

Currently, with the exception of Bennett's Pond trails, the trails in Ridgefield are marked with painted blazes. There are some trends to go to small metal or plastic squares (diamonds) nailed to trees, but for the near future, we will continue to mark trails with painted blazes. There are some accepted conventions for markings as shown below.

Trail Blaze Conventions

Blazes should approximately **2x6** inches and should be placed at eye level for best visibility in the woods. As shown, a single blaze marks a straight trail, a double blaze indicates a turn with the top blaze offset in the direction of the turn, and 2 blazes over 1 indicate the end or beginning of a trail.



A good exterior oil or latex paint is recommended for painting blazes, and latex paint is generally easier to work with and much easier to cleanup afterward, although may not last as long as oil. Spray paint is generally not recommended for blazes since it is reported not to last as long as exterior oil or latex paint. We recently repainted the blazes in Hemlock Hills using exterior latex paint from Ridgefield Hardware, using standard colors of red, yellow, orange, and white. It was found that the standard blue was too dark and has to be lightened by mixing in some white. Some paint is currently available at the Conservation Commission office, or, the office will recommend the paint and colors and the cost of materials will be reimbursed by the Commission. Call the Commission at 431-2713.

In repainting an old trail, there may be times when the old blaze must be removed – it was too large, too high, wrong tree, or the trail is being relocated. In a lot of cases, old blazes can be removed with a paint scraper as long as care is used to avoid going into the cambium (green) layer of the tree – this won't work on thin barked trees like beech and birch. If they can't be scraped off, they can be over painted with grey spray paint. It may also be helpful on very rough-barked trees to make a flat area for the blaze with the paint scraper.

A desired tool kit for blazing consists of a plastic pail to carry everything, a paint scraper, quart can of paint, paint can opener, small plastic container for paint, a bottle of water for cleaning up mistakes or spills, grey spray paint and a rag or cloth. It is much easier to work in pairs, with one person ahead, spotting and preparing the locations for blazes and the other doing the painting.

If anyone has questions about blazing, please don't hesitate to call Dave Cronin at 203-438-2978 or davcron@aol.com