

New recreational trail open for outdoor enthusiasts

By Scott Feldman

Turley Correspondent, sfeldman@turley.com

BELCHERTOWN – A joint effort between the Belchertown Land Trust and the Mill Valley Snowmobile Club has resulted in the creation of a new recreational trail.

A crew of eight volunteers consisting of members from each group spent more than 100 hours between November and December clearing a trail section in the center of Belchertown between Maple and Jackson Streets. The trail is now open and ready for public use.

“We’ve been waiting for someone to help us do the trail for two years and we finally got fed up and did it,” said Bill Lyons, a director at the Belchertown land trust and the “point man” for the project.

The trail clearing was a large undertaking that required the use of tractors, excavators, chain saws and much more to clear trees and debris in the area.

The highlight of the work the crew performed was the construction of a bridge over a small stream at the trail, which was paid for with funds from the Community Preservation Act. All of the work on the project was done on a volunteer basis.

The previous unofficial trail in the area was fairly close to railroad tracks that are still in use. Lyons said that it is not a good idea for people to enjoy recreational activities near train tracks. The new trail redirected the old one onto land that is owned by the Belchertown Land Trust, which should make the trail much safer.

“The major concern was to continue the Land Trust’s recreation path and get it off of the unsafe rail bed,” Lyons said.

The BLT had purchased sections of the old railroad bed a number of years ago and has been working on surveying sections and clearing them to provide opportunities for people to enjoy more of the open space in Belchertown.

“This trail was important because it is used heavily for



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Bill Lyons stands on a bridge at the center of the trail between Jackson and Maple Streets, that was the product of a joint effort between the Belchertown Land Trust and the Mill Valley Snowmobile Club.

a variety of activities including horseback riding, cross-country skiing, bicycling, running and other stuff,” Lyons said.

The BLT, the Belchertown Conservation Commission and the Mill Valley Snowmobile Club have been able to open up miles of trails for everyone to use starting at Franklin Street in South Belchertown up to this latest section.

The section from Jackson Street to Bay Road has been surveyed and volunteers will be working in the future on clearing trails along this path as well, which will provide more accessibility for people to enjoy the trail network in town.