

**Town Report for 2012**  
**Town of Rockport, Massachusetts**  
**Millbrook Meadow Committee**



**New dam at head of Millbrook Meadow nears Completion.**

**This was a big year** for the Millbrook Meadow Committee. From the start of the year we had to plan for eventually losing much use of the Meadow this year because of the construction of a new dam.

Even so, Rockporters were able to enjoy the use of the Meadow right up to the end of July. We had our annual Spring cleanup in April. Over 20 energetic Rockporters came for the morning and worked to rake, cut underbrush and generally make our Meadow spic and span. Alongside our workers were several from the Rockport Garden Club, working on their project to remove the infestation of Japanese Knotweed that has grown up along the banks of the Mill Brook.

At the start of August the fences went up, and work began on removing the remnants of our old Mill Dam, originally built of logs, rocks and dirt in 1702, then replaced with Rockport granite in about 1840. This sturdy dam, which served several mills over the years, blew out in May, 2006 during the Mother's Day deluge.

In order to construct the new dam, several fine old trees were cut down.

The new dam, constructed using all the best 21<sup>st</sup> Century engineering practices, is faced with old Rockport granite, so that, while the dam is modern reinforced concrete, its

granite surfaces will fit right in with all its surroundings that Rockporters have enjoyed for over three centuries. The dam was scheduled for completion at the end of 2012, but restoration of the Meadow will continue during the first part of 2013. The contract for constructing the new dam calls for restoring the Meadow, and planting new trees to replace those that were cut down for the dam construction. The contractor for repairing the dam, T. Ford Company of Georgetown MA, has specific expertise in civil construction; specifically environmental remediation and restoration and waterside construction.

In February 2012 John Sparks of the Rockport Garden Club, anticipating the disturbance of Millbrook Meadow for construction of the new dam, gathered members of the Millbrook Meadow Committee, Garden Club, Eric Hutchins, a NOAA fisheries and dam expert who lives in Rockport, and others to form an Ad Hoc Millbrook Meadow Restoration Committee.

In March Millbrook Meadow Committee and Rockport Garden Club members met with Joseph Parisi, Rockport's Director of Public Works, to form a plan for restoration of the Meadow, including a geotechnical survey of the meadow and the Mill Brook itself, with the objective of repairing and restoring the brook, whose banks are littered with granite blocks that have fallen out of place, and rebuilding the Meadow so that it drains more effectively. The plan would also study the trees and plant life, with the objective of replacing trees which may become a detriment, because of their location, or because of the likelihood of their collapsing due to age and infestation.

In April Meadow Committee Chairwoman Alice Segel led a "Walk through the Meadow" with Mr. Parisi, Mr. Sparks and others, as plans for restoration continued.

In May, Ms. Segel and Jennifer McCarthy resigned from Millbrook Meadow Committee, leaving only Marcia Lombardo and Sam Coulbourn as members. Mr. Coulbourn assumed interim chairmanship of the Committee. Shortly afterward, Michael Welcome, Shannon Mason, Nate Sotis, Charmaine Blanchard and George Hobbs were nominated for membership in the Committee, and they were approved by the Board of Selectmen. A month later, Frederick (Ted) Tarr II was nominated, and approved by the Selectmen. In November Barbara and John Sparks were nominated for membership, and approved in December. At year's end Beverly Robbins had been nominated, and her approval by the Selectmen was expected shortly.



**Members of Millbrook Meadow Committee review plans for new dam (Left to right: Nate Sotis, Michael Welcome, John Sparks, Eric Hutchins, Shannon Mason review plans shown by George Robertson.)**

In early August the contractor removed trees in the way of construction, rolled up half of the Meadow and replaced it with crushed stone to facilitate movement of heavy equipment. By mid-August, the Mill Pond was drained, leaving only enough water on the bottom to sustain aquatic life.

It has become acutely obvious to many Rockporters that the Mill Pond needs urgent attention to save it from becoming a weed-filled swamp. The construction of the new dam has dramatized the urgency of repairs to the pond.

The pond and the Meadow are the recipients of water draining from the watershed, and from any contaminants from the watershed, so that it began to be apparent that the Committee ought to consider the whole ecosystem.

During the summer, members of the Millbrook Meadow Committee and others began to plan a proposed change in the mission of the Committee, to encompass the watercourse below Railroad Avenue including the Pond, the dam, and the Meadow, and to consider the activities of the contributing watershed, which is the area between Loop Pond, Pool's Hill and Sandy Bay which drains into Mill Brook. The Committee plans to submit the new mission statement to the Board of Selectmen in early 2013.

The Committee has begun formation of an informal auxiliary group called the Friends of the Mill Brook Watershed. Rockporters who wish to support the activities in the Pond and Meadow, and who take part in periodic cleanups, are invited to join this group.

Early in 2013 the Committee has plans to move forward with a plan for restoration of the Meadow, arranging for a geotechnical survey early enough to take advantage of dam construction funds reserved for restoring the Meadow. The Committee will work with the Director of Public Works, Community Preservation Committee and

Conservation Commission to obtain funding for rebuilding of the Mill Brook, restoration of the Meadow, and restoration of the Mill Pond.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "S. Coulbourn", written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned on a light-colored rectangular background.

Samuel W. Coulbourn,  
Chairman