



### Chairman's report

Susie Banta

*Staying connected.*

In November, 2009, ECTA held its first "Open Board of Director's Meeting". We did this because those of us in the thick of our busy transition year realized that our members and loyal supporters couldn't know all that was happening. We had lots to tell everyone, the meeting was very well received and will now be a regular feature of our calendar. Communication remains a top priority as we tackle more projects and work to expand our membership and supporter base. The months between November and March are usually pretty quiet with not much to tell. Not so this year....

The weather has been front and center on our radar screen for most of the winter. In January, we prayed for snow to blanket our trails for the first ever Myopia Sled Dog Races. We were rewarded with one of the most fun, best attended outdoor events on the North Shore...read all about it. That is the good news.

As Alex mentions in his Director's Report, the weather turned against us in February and March, creating a spring trail clean-up nightmare. The trail clean-up will be major and the cost significant. We have much we want to accomplish this year, but first the trails must be cleared of Mother Nature's mess. We hope you will consider joining us in person for a volunteer trail clean-up day (go to our website [ectaonline.org](http://ectaonline.org) for dates and details) and, if you can, respond to our Spring Annual Appeal letter with a donation above your membership dues.

I also hope you will consider joining us for our ECTA Annual

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*Trees knocked down during the violent wind storm block the Pingree trail, a familiar scene on most trails in the ECTA network.*

### From the Director

Alex Van Alen

*Storms bring the trail community outside.*

Trees down across the trails in West Newbury, Appleton Farms and Pingree Reservation. Water up and over my knee-high boots in Biolabs. Bradley Palmer is a mess. These are just some of the stories coming in after a massive windstorm February 25 followed by a monsoon like Nor'Easter shortly thereafter.

We have mobilized our Trail Stewards to assess the damage, and working with our contractors, volunteers, landowners and partner organizations (The Trustees of Reservations, Greenbelt, Bradley Palmer/DCR) we are assuring that the trail system will be up and open in quick fashion. Already, and the water has hardly receded, we have

cleared all of the damage in Biolabs, a volunteer crew has been clearing the trails in West Newbury, the crew at Bradley Palmer is working hard on those trails, and we are responding to a stream of reports from all of our towns.

It is because of the enormous support that our members and volunteers give, that the ECTA is ready and able to keep this vast network of trails safe and passable. It is not hard to imagine, that without this incredible community's efforts, these trails would be lost to development or abandoned from negligence. Your Board, Carol, Pam and I feel grateful everyday that we have the opportunity to work in such a great place for such a great cause. As the trails dry out, we hope to see you out there.

## ECTA Partners with Topsfield Linear Common

by Joe Geller, ECTA Trail Steward  
and Chairman, Topsfield Rail Trail  
Committee

There is an abandoned rail bed that once started in Wakefield and ended in Newburyport and it goes right through Topsfield. The towns along the rail bed are all working towards converting it into a 40-mile long recreational path. In Topsfield our 4 miles are called the TLC, or Topsfield Linear Common. As evidenced by Topsfield Open Space committee surveys we know that Topsfielders highly value recreational paths. In 2005 the Selectmen created a Rail Trail Committee with the mission to convert the abandoned rail bed into a recreational path without the use of Town funds. Topsfield supported this at town meeting and at the polls in 2008.

Our volunteers went about raising funds mostly through grants and donations from organizations such as ECTA. The ECTA funds were used to re-deck the railroad bridge over the Ipswich River. The labor was contributed by volunteers from Topsfield and your own Alex Van Alen. With the bridge now passable we see lots of walkers and bikers enjoying the views. During the recent rains and flooding it was a popular spot in which to view the river. As the TLC encourages all forms of non-motorized activities, your small and large four-footed friends are most welcome as long as they pick up after themselves.

As this article is being written, a non-profit organization, the Iron Horse Preservation Society, is starting to remove all the remaining rails and ties along our trail at no cost to Topsfield. Without the passion and generosity of volunteers the TLC might remain just a dream.



Topsfield Rail Trail Committee Members. For more information on the TLC, visit [www.topsfieldtrail.org](http://www.topsfieldtrail.org)

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## ECTA Trail Maps Available Now at These Stores

ECTA Trail Maps are now available at stores throughout our area. Maps include:

Ipswich  
Hamilton/Wenham  
West Newbury  
Topsfield

We will soon have a map available that includes Bradley Palmer, Willowdale, Appleton Farms and New England Biolabs Trails. If you are interested in purchasing a map, please visit one of these stores that help support our trail system.

Ipswich  
Coastal Green Grocer  
Ipswich Cycle  
Hamilton  
Green Meadows Farm  
Wenham  
Wenham Sports Stop  
West Newbury  
GAR Library  
West Newbury Food Mart  
Beverly  
New England Running Co.  
Pinnacle Bikes

Topsfield  
Gil's Grocery  
Bicycle Shop of Topsfield

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## Mud Season Reminder

During the mud season, please respect the signs when trails are closed. Riders, stay off trails until they are dry. Most trails open around the 1st of May depending on trail conditions.

