

New Ski Trail in the Weeks Forest

BY MICHAEL ALEXANDER

Legend has it that 50-some-odd years ago in the hills of West Guilford there was a boy who could ski like the wind. Each morning, he waited for the school bus as he waxed his skis to the conditions of the day. When he spotted the school bus approaching its usual stop, that was his signal to go! The race was on to the Guilford Elementary School: cross country skier vs. big yellow school bus. Charting a serpentine route in the woods just north of Carpenter Hill Road, he would kick, glide, and herringbone his way to school. On more days than not, the lone skier would arrive first, just as the bus chugged its way up School Road. The diesel-powered school bus was simply no match. Soon this Guilford student would be representing the United States in the 1976 Winter Olympics, with Bill Koch shocking the world by bringing home a silver medal to Guilford, Vermont.

The goal of the Guilford Trails Committee is to expand foot trails in our town. In the spirit of Bill Koch's race against the school bus, the committee

has completed initial work on blazing a new ski trail in the Weeks Forest. Located in Guilford Center just across from the old brick schoolhouse, the Weeks Forest carriage road has become a popular spot for enjoying a scenic and historical walk along the Broad Brook. This new trail begins just across from the footbridge at the end of the carriage road, and ascends towards a view near the top of Wilkins Hill. The four-mile trail then loops back to the beginning of the carriage road via a winding and thrilling descent on the south side of the Weeks Forest.

This past fall, several crews of volunteers assembled on weekends to clear the initial trail route. Using a mix of chainsaws and hand tools, the crews removed downed trees and small branches to open up the route. The goal was to create a natural, flowing trail that was minimally cleared and relatively narrow. Designed to be a cross country ski trail in the winter, with a 500-foot vertical rise, the trail is

a challenging and exhilarating ski. The Trail Committee has plans to create other ski trail options within the Weeks Forest that are flatter and more accessible for all abilities. In the future, this network of ski trails will also provide great options for hiking in the summer.

Next steps for the new trail include mapping the final route and clearly marking the trail with signs, maps, and blazes. The committee will be undertaking regular improvements and maintenance to the expanding Weeks Forest trail system. The Guilford Trails Committee is grateful for the help of our trail crews, and we are excited to continue to expand foot trails in our town.



Bill Koch ski trail

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