

Here's what we did in 2009.... We've been busy!

- Reported over 15 instances of illegal activity within Bear Hole to town officials. This ranged from vehicles illegally breaching restricted areas, illegal hunting, illegal cutting of trees, illegal bonfires and dumping.
- Conducted two large volunteer clean-ups of debris in Bear Hole removing 16.5 tons of material.
 - Smaller clean-ups were routinely conducted targeting loose litter and small isolated locales of larger debris.
- Spring 2009, 22 vernal pools within Bear Hole were researched. Once the state's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program certifies these vernal pools based on our data, areas within the watershed should be protected and ensure sensitive species are guaranteed a habitat for decades to come.
- Met with DPW and Water Department administrators regarding Bear Hole's future as open space as well as a surface water supply for the town. Details of a new water transmission main from the Southwick Wells was also discussed in detail and what it means for Bear Hole in years to come.
- Met with the town's Conservation Officer regarding possible land acquisition along Morgan Road in Bear Hole Watershed. This effort is time consuming and will continue in 2010.
- Hosted two very successful Bear Hole Awareness events drawing at least 200 people into the watershed to learn about the area's historical and environmental significance.
- Initiated historical research about Millville Road and its mill buildings as well as other areas and historical events within Bear Hole. Bear Hole's history is fascinating to explore.
- The Committee reached out to West Springfield High School students to get involved in Bear Hole.
- Hosted two successful recreational hikes covering a total of 10 miles between the two excursions. The M&M Trail was explored as well as hiking trails closer to the reservoir. 16 people participated.
- Encouraged the DPW to improve the parking area at the end of Bear Hole Road. Although the work done was not perfect, it greatly improved the previously existing pitted and muddy mess.

- Initiated a review of town ordinances pertaining to Bear Hole. This review encouraged the DPW and Water Department to develop new updated regulations and fines. The Environmental Committee was invited to provide input on the proposed ordinances, which will be under review with hopeful implementation in 2010.
- Fall of 2009 - received a citizen's complaint of wetlands destruction in Mittineague Park. The matter was followed up with the town's Conservation Officer who pursued a cease to the destruction and mandated the remediation of affected areas.
- Interacted with the Friends of Mittineague Park regarding new methods of maintaining the park's large meadows. It is hopeful that new management practices will invite various creatures to use the meadows as habitat. This will be experimental and has the support of DPW and Park / Recreation officials.
- Interacted with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to learn more about Bear Hole as a watershed as well as confirming the area's acreage.
- Launched a formal website as an effort to broaden how people can get involved and/or learn more.
- Fall of 2008 - assisted with the planting of 900 pine tree saplings within Bear Hole near Prospect Ave.
- Fall of 2008 - committee members attended the town's Master Plan public forum and spoke out in favor of preserving Bear Hole and Mittineague Park.