

Report of the Conservation Commission 2014

The Commission continued to administer the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the Town Wetland Protection Bylaw, issuing 2 Orders of Conditions (no Amended Orders) and 2 Extensions. Also, 6 Determinations of Applicability were issued. No projects were denied by the Commission in 2014. Regular public meetings were generally conducted bi-weekly and numerous site inspections were held during the year. Many sites were reviewed and approved for building permit application sign-offs by the Conservation Commission Agent. Also, 11 Pre-Construction Evaluation applications were reviewed resulting in the issuance of 6 Erosion and Sediment Control Permits. The following major projects were monitored in 2014: Crosswinds subdivision site work located between Plain and Station Streets, Rockwood Meadows on East Street, and many Town roadway re-paving filings. The Commission also informally resolved several other minor violations of the Wetland Protection Act. Certificates of Compliance were issued for 9 completed projects.

The Stormwater Bylaw permits were reviewed and issued by the Commission.

The Commission provided several comment letters to the Planning Board regarding applications for Large Lot Subdivisions and other development proposals.

The Commission and the Board of Health administered town funds allocated for beaver control. Funds were expended to maintain fencing and pond levelers installed at the Southboro Road bogs.

The Conservation Commission is working with the ULSC which has received a DCR grant for the development of a Forest Stewardship Plan for the Warren Brook Watershed Conservation Area and adjacent town owned land in North Upton. Together, the parcels total about 330 acres. The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife and Massachusetts Audubon Ecological Extension Service will assist with the project. Work will begin in February of 2015.

2014 marked the 50th anniversary of the Commission. In 1957 Massachusetts adopted the Conservation Commission Act (G. L. Chapter 40 §8C). This law enabled towns to establish Conservation Commissions. The Upton Commission was established through town meeting vote and held its first meeting on April 1, 1964. The Conservation Commission Act authorized the Commission to prepare Open Space and Recreation Plans, acquire and protect open space, and established a Conservation Fund. In 1972 Conservation Commissions were given responsibility for administering the Wetlands Protection Act (G.L. Ch. 131 §40). To provide additional protection of water quality and wetland resources, the Town of Upton approved a Wetland Protection Bylaw in 2004 and a Stormwater Bylaw in 2012. The Commission and its subcommittees continue to explore land protection opportunities and manages town owned conservation areas and open space totaling approximately 902 acres. 66 individuals have served on the

Commission since its inception. To commemorate the anniversary, the Commission planted a white oak sapling at the Whitney Conservation Area. The sapling was grown from a seedling found underneath an ancient white oak “wolf” or “pasture” tree at the Stefans Farm.

Sandy Lajoie was recognized for her 30th year as a member of the Conservation Commission. Congratulations Sandy!

The Commission has been monitoring Pratt Pond Ice-Out as an indicator of climate change since 2010. Pratt Pond Ice out is defined as first day in spring when no ice is visible in the pond from a vantage point near the intersection of School Street and North Main Street. In 2014 the pond was ice free on April 5th.

Respectfully Submitted,

Conservation Commission

Christine Scott, Chairperson
Mike Penko, Vice-Chairperson
Sandra Lajoie, Treasurer
Scott Heim, Member
Thomas Jango, Member
Alan Miano, Member
Marcella Stasa, Member
Mary Overholt, Associate member
Denise Smith, Administrative Assistant
Mathew Selby, Conservation Agent