

2021 Report of the Conservation Commission
Final Draft

The Commission administered the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, the Town Wetland Protection Bylaws and the Town Stormwater Bylaw. Regular public meetings were generally conducted bi-weekly and numerous site inspections were held during the year. Due to the pandemic, these meetings were held remotely. Any sites were reviewed and approved for building permit application signoffs by the Conservation Commission Agent. The Intermunicipal Agreement with Northbridge to share the agent's position was revised and finalized at the beginning of the fiscal year.

Major projects that were reviewed and permitted included the Preserve at Dean Pond Subdivision, Phase 2 of the Hartford Avenue North/High Street/Hopkinton Road Transportation Improvement Project, the Town's community center, and Cobbler's Creek senior housing development on North Street were also permitted. Projects under construction monitored by the Commission in 2021 included: the Upton Ridge senior housing development, the Preserve at Dean Pond subdivision, and Phase 1 of the High Street/Hopkinton Road Transportation Improvement. One enforcement order was issued with associated fines levied. The Commission resolved several other violations of the Wetland Protection Act and/or the town wetland bylaw. The Conservation Restriction at Kenneth Village was inspected. A baseline documentation Report for the Rockwood Meadows Conservation Restriction was funded.

The Commission welcomed our new administrative assistant, Patricia Marvelle. Scott Heim declined to be reappointed to the commission after 18 years of service. Scott, a professional wildlife biologist, was the principal author of the 2018 North Upton Open Space Stewardship Plan and managed the Warren Brook Watershed Conservation Area forest harvest. His expertise will be greatly missed.

The Commission, working with the Sudbury Valley Trustees and Metacomet Land Trust, preserved four parcels on Peppercorn Hill. Three parcels are now owned by the town: the "Walleston Conservation Area", the "Kelly Family Conservation Area", and a parcel yet to be named. An additional parcel was acquired and is managed by the Metacomet Land Trust (MLT) and is named the "Donald and Anne Kerr Memorial Preserve". Funding for the purchase of these parcels was through a Conservation Partnership Grant to MLT, CPA funds appropriated at a 2020 town meeting, foundation grants, and private donations. The Commission also used the Conservation Fund to acquire a small parcel with frontage on Lake Wildwood and committed to help fund an Agricultural Preservation Restriction on the Town Line Dairy Farm.

The Commission and Town Manager received a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Planning Grant administered by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. The MVP Findings Report was completed and the town is now eligible to apply for MVP Action Grants.

Applications/Requests received:

- Notice of Intent (NOI) = 16
- Requests for Determination (RDA) = 7
- Abbreviated Notice of Resource Area Delineation (ANRAD) = 0
- Request for Certificate of Compliance (COC) = 10
- Order of Conditions (OOC) Extensions = 2
- Emergency Permit Request = 0
- Stormwater Management Permit Application = 0
- Erosion Control Permit Application = 3

Decisions/Actions issued by the Commission:

- Order of Conditions (OOC) issued = 16 (no denials)
- Determinations = 7
- Order of Resource Area Delineation (ORAD) = 0
- Certificate of Compliance = 9 (including 2 partial)
- Order of Conditions Extension = 1
- Enforcement Orders = 1
- Emergency Certifications = 0
- Erosion Control Permits = 3
- Stormwater Management Permits = 0

The Commission with the Board of Health administered town funds allocated for beaver control. Funds were expended to maintain existing pond levelers to regulate the water levels at several locations. The Board of Health oversaw trapping beavers at Southborough Road to protect the road infrastructure.

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 2021, the pond was ice free on March 20th. Ice-In, defined as first day in fall or winter when Pratt Pond is entirely ice covered from a vantage point near the intersection of School Street and North Main Street, occurred on December 24.

Respectfully Submitted,
Conservation Commission

Christine Scott, Chairperson
Mike Penko, Vice-Chairperson
Sandra Lajoie, Treasurer
Thomas Jango, Member
Alan Miano, Member
Mary Overholt, Member
Marcella Stasa, Member
David Szczebak, Associate Member
David Pickart, Conservation Agent
Patricia Marvelle, Administrative Assistant