

2022 Report of the Conservation Commission

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. Many sites were reviewed and approved for building permit application signoffs by the Conservation Commission Administrator. Major projects that were reviewed and permitted included East St. Estates and Governor's Landing which is still in the review phase. Projects under construction monitored by the Commission in 2022 included: the Upton Ridge senior housing development, the Preserve at Dean Pond subdivision, and Cobbler's Creek Senior housing. Eight enforcement orders were issued. The Commission resolved several other violations of the Wetland Protection Act and/or the town wetland bylaw. The Commission revised the wetland bylaw to allow for consideration of climate resiliency in reviewing applications.

Administrator Dave Pickart resigned to take a full-time position in Northbridge at the end of May. Administrative Assistant Patricia Marville transitioned to working in the Treasurers office at the end of June, although still providing some assistance through July. Both will be greatly missed. In August Mary Overholt was hired to take the Conservation Administrator position, stepping down from the Conservation Commission. Associate member Dave Szczebak became a full member of the Commission in June.

The Open Space Committee helped to facilitate the acquisition of a property on Mechanic St. See the Open space report for more details.

The Land Stewardship Committee submitted two Requests for Determination of Applicability through the Conservation Commission for trail work. The work includes the installation of a bridge in the Warren Brook Conservation area to replace an existing smaller bridge and the installation of a long boardwalk on a muddy cart path in Whitney Conservation Area East. The Land Stewardship Committee also submitted a Notice of Intent for the construction of a larger bridge over Warren Brook on the Roberston Family Conservation Restriction. Money from the Conservation fund was used for the Town Line Dairy Agricultural Preservation Restriction.

Applications/Requests received:

- Notice of Intent (NOI) = 10
- Requests for Determination (RDA) = 11
- Abbreviated Notice of Resource Area Delineation (ANRAD) = 2
- Request for Certificate of Compliance (COC) = 5
- Order of Conditions (OOC) Extensions = 1
- Emergency Permit Request = 0
- Stormwater Management Permit Application = 0
- Erosion Control Permit Application = 1

Decisions/Actions issued by the Commission:

- Order of Conditions (OOC) issued = 10
- Determinations = 11
- Order of Resource Area Delineation (ORAD) = 1

- Certificate of Compliance = 5 (including 1 partial)
- Order of Conditions Extension = 1
- Enforcement Orders = 8
- Emergency Certifications = 0
- Erosion Control Permits = 1
- Stormwater Management Permits = 0

The Commission with the Board of Health administered town funds allocated for beaver control. The Board of Health oversaw trapping beavers at the Glen Ave. pump station, on Center Brook behind the VFW and near the intersection of Walnut and East St.

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 2022, the pond was ice free on Jan 2nd and March 15th. 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 12.

Respectfully Submitted,
Conservation Commission

Christine Scott, Chairperson
Mike Penko, Vice-Chairperson
Sandra Lajoie, Treasurer
Thomas Jango, Member
Alan Miano, Member
Marcella Stasa, Member
David Szczebak, Member
Mary Overholt, Conservation Administrator