

## **CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

The Conservation Commission consists of up to seven members appointed by the Board of Selectmen to administer and enforce both the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the Town of Stow Wetlands Protection Bylaw. Areas subject to protection under these regulations include wetlands, rivers, streams, other water bodies and their banks, and flood plains, among others. In addition to these resource areas, the Commission must review and if appropriate, stipulate conditions under which proposed activities within 100 feet of the resource or 200 feet of ponds and streams except for Lake Boon must be conducted. The Commission also works to manage over 1,200 acres of conservation land throughout the community and to protect additional high priority lands. Trail maps and permit applications are available in the Conservation Commission office, which is located in the Town Building.

Presently, the Commission consists of seven members with varied backgrounds and a common interest in environmental issues. In addition, we have the strong support of several associate members who work on special projects, such as wetland delineation, drainage issues, trail mapping, forestry management, community gardens and open space planning.

### **Conservation Land Updates**

Eagle Scout Ceremony: Scott Sacra, Geoffrey Tyler and Ben Langelo were awarded certificates from the Land Stewardship Committee on behalf of the Conservation Commission for their contributions to Flagg Hill and Marble Hill Conservation Areas.

The Commission approved a permit submitted by Dennis Walsh for the study of the amphibians that inhabit the Gardner Hill Conservation Area (Town Forest). The results of the study will be submitted to the Commission yearly. Vernal pools will be certified as a result of Mr. Walsh's work.

Five permits were issued for guided walks and educational activities at the Flagg Hill Conservation Area and Heath Hen Meadow Brook Woodland. There were several reported instances of trees down across trails after high winds, Land Steward, Bruce Trefry, checked the trails and removed obstructions and potential hazards. The overgrown trail entrances were cleared at Wheeler Road and Gates Lane for improved access to Spindle Hill; and from the rear of Pompositticut School for Marble Hill. The meadow located on the Woodhead parcel of Flagg Hill was mowed to control successional species and enhance habitat for Eastern Bluebirds. David Schroeder installed a new side-entrance door at the garage located on the Flagg Hill property. The funds for the door were raised as part of the Eagle Scout project undertaken by Geoffrey Tyler.

The Stow Community Gardens is located at the Captain Sargent Conservation Area just off Tuttle Lane on the eastern side of Stow. During the past year, the Community Garden's Steward, Joyce Bunce supervised the creation of 30 x 50 foot garden plots. The Commission received twenty-six applications for the use of the garden plots from residents and non-residents which more than doubled from 2005. Community interest and support is particularly noteworthy. Scott Morse harrowed the existing plots in the spring and again at the end of the growing season in early November. A pitcher pump was installed in April, which made a huge difference in both production and in the number of the gardeners interested in farming at the site. Thank you Joyce!

Hale Woodlands Conservation Restriction was approved and signed by the Secretary of Environmental Affairs and a base line monitoring report will be prepared in 2007. The

Commission also purchased a 3.6-acre parcel of land in the Delaney watershed for the protection of numerous wetland resources and wildlife habitat.

The Stow Highway Department deserves high praise for keeping the conservation area parking lots in good condition, plowing them during the winter and assisting the Commission in keeping trails passable and safe, as do the Stow Fire Department and Police Department for rescue efforts, fire protection, and assistance in enforcing the regulations and trail inspections when called upon.

Conservation Land Volunteers: The majority of our 43 volunteers are Stow residents, some are from neighboring towns, and everyone shares a common interest in conservation related projects. This work force has provided 861 hours of volunteer labor in the Flagg Hill Conservation Area and Heath Hen Meadow Brook Woodland over the past 7 years. A heartfelt Thank You to all of the volunteers for their contribution to our community. Anyone interested in volunteering should contact the Commission at 978-897-8615.

### **Public Hearings**

Hearings for residential construction, wetland delineations/resources and restoration projects as a result of enforcement action continued at a brisk pace, including Minute Man Airfield for their Vegetative Management Plan, Arbor Glen Active Adult Community, Villages at Stow, Bose Corporation, Massachusetts Fire Fighting Academy, and several small subdivisions. Commission members continued their participation in several town-wide planning projects, including updating of the Master Plan, School Building Committee, Lower Village Water Study Committee, Open Space and Recreation Plan and Community Preservation Committee.

The Commission held 47 public hearings for projects during the year. A total of \$7,000 was generated for the Town by these hearings and applications. License Agreements, Regulations for Wetland Protection Bylaw, Trail Guides, copy fees and donations also generated \$820.

### **Cooperative Efforts and Long Range Planning**

Work plan priorities for the coming year include but are not limited to the publication of an approved Open Space and Recreation Plan, revisions to the Wetland Protection Regulations, the Land Stewardship Committee, baseline monitoring for conservation restrictions, vernal pool education and invasive species identification. The commission also works collaboratively with local conservation organizations including the Stow Conservation Trust and Sudbury Valley Trustees on both land protection and land management issues.

### **Administration**

Becky Mattison is the liaison to the Master Plan Committee and Kathy Sferra is the Commission's liaison to the Community Preservation Committee. Doug Moffat and Kathy Sferra are the Commission's liaisons to the Open Space & Recreation Plan Committee. Kathy Sferra is also a member of the Open Space Committee. David Cobb is the Commission's liaison to the Land Stewardship Committee. Due to the dedication and hard work of these committees, a Community Preservation Plan has been drafted, the development of a Community Development Plan is in progress, a Draft Open Space & Recreation Plan has been completed and is now being finalized and the formation of a Stewardship Committee is in the beginning phase.

Bruce Trefry is the Commission's Land Steward and the parcel steward for Flagg Hill Conservation Area and Heath Hen Meadow Brook Woodland. Bruce provides overall management of these sensitive resource areas and does an outstanding job for the Commission.

Joyce Bunce is the steward and a former assistant steward for the community gardens at the Captain Sargent Conservation Area on Tuttle Lane. She is also a member of Stow's Garden Club. Joyce has done a wonderful job coordinating participants, laying out plots and educating the gardeners on organic farming. Thank you, Joyce!

Due to work and family commitments, Stephen O'Riorden resigned from the Conservation Commission in May after a three-year term, which included a year as Chairman. The Commission would like to take the opportunity to thank Stephen for his contributions and sincere concern for the preservation of the town's wetland resources, agriculture and conservation lands.

David Coppes was appointed in October to fill the vacant seat. David has a background in Civil Engineering and a former member of the Conservation Commission in Arlington. David is the Director of Western Operations for the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority.

Pat Perry's consistent management of daily operations is outstanding. We all thank Pat for her efforts. Thanks to her hard work, the Commission has maintained and improved its high standard of professionalism in its interactions with town residents, other town boards and commissions, and state regulatory and enforcement bodies. As we add more conservation land to that already under management by the Commission, and as development activity in Stow accelerates, it becomes more and more important to coordinate the activities of the Commission with other town boards and effectively maintain required documentation. Pat continues to do an outstanding job in her role of coordinating daily operations and the successes of the Conservation Commission are due in large part to her dedication and effort.

In October Pat was honored by the Stow Conservation Trust at their annual Harvest Ball and presented with their first ever 2006 Land Conservation Award in recognition of her past 17 years of dedication and future commitment as Administrator for the Stow Conservation Commission in which she plays a leadership role in Town Conservation matters as well as a valuable liaison to the Commonwealth and to various parties and organizations involved in this work.

The Commission benefits from working with town departments, land trusts, associate members and the community. Your input and assistance are invaluable to the Commission. **THANK YOU!**

If you have an interest, expertise or experience in conservation or environmental protection and would like to be a member, an associate member or volunteer, please call the office at 897-8615 or attend a meeting. Meetings are generally held on the first and third Tuesday of every month.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Sferra, Chairman  
Doug Moffat, Vice Chairman  
Stephan Jablon  
David Cobb  
Rebecca Mattison  
David Coppes  
Ingeborg Hegemann Clark  
Bruce Trefry, Associate

Dwight Sipler, Associate  
Stewart Dalzell, Associate  
John Harding, Associate  
Pamela Weathers, Associate  
Joyce Bunce, Associate  
Kathy Tarbi, Associate  
  
Patricia Perry, Administrative Assistant