

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Edward Englemann.....	2006
Lori Stephenson.....	2006
William Fateiger, Chairman.....	2007
Karen Augustine.....	2007
Scott Duhaime.....	2008
Sarah Greenough.....	2008
Amy Wilson.....	2008
Carol Gumbart, Conservation Administrator	

Membership: Sarah Greenough was appointed to the Commission in July of 2005. The Commission is grateful to all the non-member volunteers that assist the Commission with their work, especially with land management tasks including: the de facto Bolton Trails Committee, Eagle Scouts, Boy Scouts, 4-H Club, the Bolton Conservation Trust and many others.

Key responsibilities of the Bolton Conservation Commission include the administration of the State's Wetland Protection Act and the Rivers Protection Act, as well as the local Water Resource Protection District Zoning Bylaw and the Wetland Administrative Bylaw. The administration of these acts and bylaws occupies the bulk of the Commission's time and resources. The Conservation Commission Act charges the Commission with the responsibility to protect the town's natural resources including "the promotion and development of natural resources and the protection of watershed resources." To achieve this protection the Commission routinely reviews and makes recommendations on projects submitted to the Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning Board, Board of Health and the Board of Selectmen. Additionally, the Commission protects land by accepting gifts of land, conservation restrictions and acquisition of land in fee. The Conservation Commission Act places the care and custody of conservation land with the Commission.

Administration: The Conservation Commission consists of volunteer residents. The 7 voting members are appointed to the Commission by the Board of Selectmen. The Commission meets the first and third Tuesdays of the month at the Town Hall. All meetings are open to the public. Formal meetings and public hearings are held to review specific projects involving impacts to wetland and water resources within the town. Public hearings are advertised in the Bolton Common. During 2005, the Commission held 25 public meetings and reviewed new applications including: 8 Notice of Intents; 1 Abbreviated Notice of Resource Area Delineation; 2 Water Resource Protection District Special Permit Applications; and 15 Requests for Determinations of Applicability. The Commission made site visits for each application and held numerous informational meetings with citizens, town boards, and developers. The Commission maintains a web page on the Town of Bolton website at www.townofbolton.com where agendas, minutes, trail maps and the Open Space and Recreation Plan can be found.

Wetland Protection: In the administration of the State Wetlands and Rivers Protection Acts and the local bylaws, the Commission serves the town in a regulatory as well as a conservation capacity. Under these laws, the Commission is charged with the review and control of activities in or near the town's fragile and valuable wetland and water resources to prevent any adverse impact on those resources. Through a public review and decision-making process, the Commission regulates the work done in these areas to ensure the protection of public and private water supply, the protection of the groundwater supply, flood control, storm damage prevention, the prevention of pollution, and the protection of fisheries and wildlife habitat.

Additionally, the Commission is charged with the responsibility of confirming wetland delineations for all protected wetland resource areas. The local wetland bylaw provides additional protection of wetlands for water quality and rare species habitat including rare plant species. The interests of the bylaw extend to agriculture, aquaculture and recreation deemed important to the community. The Commission also administers Special Permit Applications under the Water Resource Protection District (WRPD). This year the Commission worked on resolving the conflicts between the WRPD and the Wetland Bylaw. The Commission plans to bring this resolution to the Annual Town Meeting.

A large portion of the Commission's work during 2005 was devoted to reviewing plans for development including: common driveway applications and associated storm water management; new house lot construction; improvements to existing dwellings located within 100 feet of wetlands; and construction activities to repair or replace failed septic systems. The Commission reviewed and approved several projects for the Bolton Department of Public Works including: road paving; culvert crossing maintenance; and the expansion of the Pan Cemetery. After working with an applicant for two years, the Commission resolved the appeal of a Wetland Bylaw Order of Conditions and a Special Permit decision that had denied driveway access within rare species habitat to a proposed single-family dwelling. The resolution permits the construction of a single-family house within a building envelope outside of any wetland resource areas. The remainder of the property will be permanently protected with a Conservation Restriction with the provision of a driveway being allowed. During the spring the Commission held numerous hearings on the Age-Restricted Development known as "Pondside" at the Crystal Springs Campground located off Main Street. The wetland hearings ran concurrently with the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) hearings on a (40B) Comprehensive Permit application. The applicant received waivers from the ZBA to the local Wetland Bylaws through the Comprehensive permit process, but the ZBA received input from the Commission throughout the process.

Although the Commission did not hold any public hearings on the "Riverside" 40B project it did discuss the project routinely throughout the year and the Commission continues to participate as the project is revised. The Commission provided input to other Boards including the Planning Board on several projects brought before them. Of note was the Commission's involvement during the Planning Board's deliberations on the Century Mill Estates Farmland and Open Space Residential Development (FOSPRD) application. The Commission assisted the Board of Selectmen with the monitoring of the flooding conditions behind the Emerson and Florence Sawyer Schools due to beavers'

blocking the flow of the streams in the area. During the summer the beavers were trapped and the Commission approved the breaching of the dams to alleviate the flooding conditions.

Open Space Preservation: The 2005 Open Space and Recreation Plan was finalized and with the support of town boards and state representatives the Plan was approved by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. The approval of this plan allows Bolton to participate in the state grant rounds through February of 2010. The Plan is used by the Commission to prioritize the protection of strategic land parcels; to evaluate the demographic trends in town, and determine strategic priorities of land preservation based on these trends; to show compliance with state initiatives enabling the town to be eligible for state grants; and to set goals and objectives for the next five years.

With the support of town meeting the Commission applied for and received a \$166,000 in grant money towards the acquisition of the Stephenson property in the Rattlesnake Hill Conservation Area. The 77-acre parcel was acquired in March and connects the Lime Kiln, Phillips Land, Harris Farm and Great Brook Farm Open Spaces together. The Commission accepted a 7.56 acre gift and trail easement from Stephen Venincasa. This trail easement runs westerly off Harvard Road just beyond Twin Maple Road. This trail easement is located north of the "Sochalski" easement on the easterly side of Harvard Road.

The Commission continues to work with the Bolton Conservation Trust to protect a number of key strategic parcels as outlined in the Open Space and Recreation Plan. To support this effort, we are working together to aggressively pursue grant funding. The Commission and other town boards submitted information to the state in the form of a Commonwealth Capital Application. The Application information provides a municipal rank that establishes the level of funding for numerous state grant programs including the Agricultural Preservation Restriction program. The joint efforts of the Conservation Commission and the Conservation Trust have strengthened land preservation in Bolton.

Land Management: The de facto Bolton Trails Committee with representatives from both the Bolton Conservation Commission and the Bolton Conservation Trust (BCT) continued to actively maintain, improve and expand the Bolton trail system within the Bolton Trail Loop. In conjunction with the BCT, we are negotiating trail easements in key locations to complete the 15-mile loop. This year, we marked the Zinc Trail starting from Corn Road, extending to a historic dam that will ultimately lead to Laurel Road. Three boardwalks were constructed and installed for this stretch of trail with the support of high school volunteers and scouts. Scouts helped the Commission by doing a trail sweep of Powder House Trail located behind Town Hall. In addition, Scouts have been installing "No Motor Vehicle" signs at numerous conservation areas. The Commission hopes that these signs will alert anyone that does not know that it is illegal to drive recreational vehicles on conservation land.

In order to increase awareness of the trail system, the Trails Committee has written articles to the Bolton Common on specific conservation areas and ran a special event, the Winter Carnival, in March 2005, to introduce residents to the new trails on the Phillips, Atlantic Union and Stephenson lands. It was a tremendous success – over 200 people showed up to enjoy the day. Trails Committee members led snowshoeing and cross-country ski tours of the trails and children at each age level enjoyed sledding races on the hill off the Bench Trail, courtesy of Mike and Karen Hoeffler. 4-H members operated a refreshment stand while several local businesses provided other support.

A \$2,600 grant was awarded to the town, through a grant application prepared by the Trails Committee, from the Recreational Trails Program, a program administered by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Recreational Trails Advisory Board, and Massachusetts Highway Department, to purchase trail-blazing signs including

a new sign showing the Bolton Trail Loop logo . With this money, the North Trail was marked with 50 signs along a 9-mile stretch between East End Road and Route 110. We intend to build and mark the South Trail in 2006. The Trail Committee expects to expand its effort to map key conservation trails and post signs along the trails. Existing maps can be downloaded from the Town of Bolton website www.townofbolton.com.

**Financial Statement
July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2005**

Wages

Appropriated	\$31,563.00
Expended	<u>\$28,277.52</u>
Unexpended balance returned to general fund	\$ 3,285.48

Expenses

Appropriated		\$31,910.00
Expended	Land Maintenance	\$3,398.34
	Training	130.00
	Vernal Pool Study	437.94
	Adv/Legal Notices	1,224.78
	Supplies	286.06
	Travel/Mileage	79.75
	Dues/Membership	20.00
	Other	148.46
	Capital	3,535.00
	Equipment	470.56
	Conservation Fund	<u>5,750.00</u>
Unexpended balance returned to general fund		<u>\$20,174.40</u>

Additional expenses paid by State Wetland Filing Fees:

	Training	\$ 124.00
	Purchase of Service	1,366.68
	Supplies	86.67
	Travel/Mileage	47.36
Dues/Membership	290.00	\$ 1,914.71