

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Did you see the beautiful Great Blue Heron on the Pinkerton Conservation Land? Did you say you wanted to go cross-country skiing on the Peanut Trail? Do you want to take your dogs for a run on the 22 acres of Conservation Land on Hadley Road? How about taking the family for a picnic on the 48 acres of land at the Busch Farm? Did you know we have a family of Great Horned Owls on the Stronach Conservation Land at the end of Bartlett Street? Were you able to take a photo of the stunning lady slippers on the Marden Conservation Land, (but don't touch)? Did you know the road crew found a Blanding's Turtle & its nest with eggs, while working on culverts? Did you want to hike on the Hidden Acres Conservation Easement that leads into the Guscora Conservation Land off Thornell Road? How about taking a mountain bike ride on the Old Lower Road Conservation Land and check out the family of beavers? All these parcels mentioned above are just some of our Conservation Land. We want you to enjoy them as much as we do. We invite you to use our land with your family and friends. We have town maps showing conservation land that would be great for hiking, cross-country skiing, exercising your dogs, bird watching, wildlife observation, fishing, farmers, canoeists, snowmobiles or just a simple picnic. The public is encouraged to use and enjoy this open space.

We have had another fabulous year for the Conservation Commission including many achievements during 2007. According to state law, it is our responsibility to protect the natural resources of the town. New Hampshire RSA 36-A directs us to "conduct researches into our local land and water areas" & seek to coordinate the activities of unofficial bodies organized for similar purposes." Thanks to the hard work of our commission and co-operation with residents, we now have two more conservation parcels. One of them is a 10+ acre track of land that sits between the Peanut Trail off Whittier Street and Old Lower Road. The Land has been named, "The Pinkerton Conservation Land", named after Jim Pinkerton and is located behind Jim's old farmhouse & pond on Whittier Street. This parcel connects to the Marden Conservation Parcel of 33+ acres that we received from Nancy Marden. In addition to the Pinkerton Parcel, we have obtained a smaller 6+ acre parcel called the "Wilder's Grove Conservation Land." This is a small but very important parcel within our shoreline protection area and aquifer. We want to thank the Wilder's Grove Cottage Association for donating this very important parcel. This is one more way to protect our natural resources and keep Newton a greener place. Our Master Plan states that we will continue to look for parcels that will increase our wildlife corridor, watershed resources and open space. As development continues in town, we will look for donations of land from residents in town and in some cases we can purchase land. Residents may be able to get a tax benefit from selling us a parcel of land at a bargain sale price while at the same time assisting in protecting our wildlife habitat and natural resources.

Our membership is made up of six regular members, three alternates, and one Selectman Ex-Officio representative. Our committee is comprised of volunteers that are appointed by the Selectmen. We are very fortunate that our committee has a wide range of knowledge concerning wildlife, vegetation, shoreline and wetland soil issues. Their new ideas, positive energy and continuous contributions of time have been an asset to our town in protecting our natural resources. The residents are lucky to have such a dedicated committee. Often times they have been presented with issues that require careful and immediate attention, and I commend their ability to think out of the box to accomplish the tasks they are presented with.

Members of the Conservation Commission were able to participate in the 2007 Law Lecture Series, as well as the Annual Convention. This included 63 individual sessions, classes and seminars. In addition to the convention, the Conservation Commission was also able to send someone to attend a Grant Writing Seminar, in North Andover. One of the missions for 2008 is to apply for more conservation grants. This year in 2007 Governor Lynch signed the Housing and Conservation Planning Program (HCPP) into law. The new program will provide potential grants that address both the local housing and conservation needs, as well another way to preserve historic resources in our community. We hope to work closely with our Planning Board, Road Agent and Zoning Board of Appeals on this new program.

Our 3rd annual Bio-Monitoring Day was held on the 48 acre parcel of Conservation Land, commonly known as the Busch Farm on May 18, 2007, in conjunction with the Newton Memorial School. This remarkable success was under the direction of Alicia Raddatz & Mike Seekamp from Seekamp Environmental Consulting, Inc. The children worked on the identification process of the Bio Monitoring of wet soil areas on the Busch Farm and the insects they found. The children were bussed to the Busch Farm for this Educational Field Trip. We had approximately 60 students and numerous parents, 7 Teachers, and the entire Conservation Commission that participated in this event. This teaches our youth about healthy water verses unhealthy water. The science teachers and homeroom teachers worked with the Conservation Commission to prepare for this field trip. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed this experience. Our goal is to include students from Memorial School, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts in our next Bio-Monitoring Day and hope to expand this to other areas in town as part of our Storm Water Management Program. We invite participation by all, and guarantee that it will be a fabulous learning experience, (and fun for all ages). The Busch Farm is one of our largest parcels that has over 48 acres to explore. This area is open to the public and includes off street parking. The easiest access is from Rte 108 (north of New Boston Road), on the right side by the pipe gate. In 2008 we have plans in place that will allow us to improve the parking area, repair culverts, add a walking bridge, make a second access for Emergency Equipment and add signage at the entrance and on the loop trails.

The proper utilization and protection of our watershed & natural resources, including but not limited to shoreline protection, wet soil issues, site walks and endangered species protection are just some of the tasks that the Conservation Commission deals with. We continue to work with the State Wetland Bureau concerning various issues in our town and also give our input on all Dredge & Fill permit applications. On April 1, 2008 some new rules take effect for Shoreland Protection. Any activities, construction, excavation and filling within the protected Shoreland and the 50' waterfront buffer, will be strictly enforced. Within this 50' waterfront buffer there is restricted vegetation removal & pesticides and herbicides are prohibited. If you notice anything that may concern you, please call the Conservation Commission. The Conservation Commission is available to assist with any community or school event. We have created a slide show that can be used to educate our residents and our youth on Newton Conservation and Recreational Land and how to keep our ground water healthy. It's the little things like washing your car, or fertilizing your lawn or even throwing a cigarette butt on the ground that can affect our water supply. Our water is our most important natural resource and it will take all of us to keep it healthy.

The Scenic Roads in town also come under the charge of this Commission, as described in RSA 231:157 and RSA 231:158. The list of Scenic Roads are: Gale Village Road, Currierville Road, Maple Avenue, Goulds Hill Road, Heath Street, Bartlett Street, Town Hall Road and Thornell Road. We work very closely with the Road Agent and his crew regarding these roads.

Family Fun Day at Greeney Park was another activity that was a wonderful success. The Newton Recreation Committee organized this terrific event and the Conservation Commission was the sponsor of relay races. We had about 30 children that participated and had prizes for all that attended. The Conservation Commission set up a separate table and had a slide show presentation with information on Newton's Conservation Land, Storm Water Management, and many photos of animals found in the Town of Newton. One very interesting animal found by our road crew was a Blanding's Turtle and its eggs in an area close to the roadway by Country Pond. This was very exciting and was passed on to the state. We are continuing to track animals of interest.

The conservation easement on Hidden Acres Farm, located on Thornell Road is being monitored according to the Bylaws of the Stewardship Committee. The landowner, Forrest Reynolds, has worked closely with the Stewardship Committee, to maintain the integrity of this historic farm and conservation easement. This easement was the conclusion of our application to the Land and Community Heritage Investment Program, (LCHIP). This is a wonderful piece of Newton History that we have the ability to protect. We continue to work with the homeowner, (Mr. Reynolds) and monitor the easement and activity on it.

This committee meets on the first and third Thursdays of each month. The meetings are held in the rear of the Town Hall at 7:30pm. All meetings are open to the public, and we encourage anyone that is interested to attend. Feel free to log onto to the town web site at <http://www.newton-nh.gov> for access to the minutes of our meetings.

We look forward to another prosperous year, and encourage your input.

Respectfully submitted, Trisha McCarthy,
John Ulcickas, Alicia Raddatz, Nancy Slombo,
Pat Wonson, Peter Mears, Tim Brennan, Kim Vaillant,
Sandy Estabrook & Kim Lowther, Secretary