

Report of the
Conservation Commission
& Town Forest Committee

Purpose of Conservation Commission

The Rochester Conservation Commission & Town Forest Committee was formed in 1963 as a broad based committee responsible for protecting open space and promoting land conservation. The Commission is a seven-member all volunteer board appointed by the Board of Selectmen for renewable three-year terms, and is supported by a full-time Conservation Agent and part-time Administrative Assistant. The Commission is responsible for administering the interests of the *Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act*, MGL Chapter 131, Section 40 and the *Rochester Wetlands Protection By-Law*. The Rochester Conservation Commission manages all Town-owned Conservation land in order to protect and sustain these natural ecosystems for current and future generations to use and enjoy.

The Rochester Conservation Commission office is located at the Town Hall Annex at 37 Marion Road; office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. The office can be reached by calling 508-763-5421 extension 206. The Commission holds public meetings on the first and third Tuesday of each month. Meetings begin at 7:00 p.m. at the Rochester Town Hall Conference Room. All hearings are advertised in *The Wanderer* at least five (5) calendar days in advance of the meeting. Public hearing notices may be viewed on-line at www.wanderer.com.

2011 Filings Under the Wetlands Protection Act and Rochester Wetlands By-law

The Conservation Commission held 18 meetings in the year 2011. The following is a summary of the number of applications received and formal actions by the Commission in 2011:

<u>PERMITS</u>	
Notice of Intent Applications	9
Requests for Determination of Applicability	12
Extension Permits	2
Certificates of Compliance	9
Enforcement Orders	2

2011 Conservation Commission Accomplishments

- Conservation Commission staff coordinated the submittal and acquisition of a \$45,000.00 Buzzards Bay National Estuary Program Municipal Mini Grant for the Doggett Brook Land Conservation Project. Acquisition of the highly developable 29-acre property, formerly owned by Deb Arney, provides a key link to 66-acres of permanently protected lands owned by The Wildlands Trust of Southeastern MA (Wildlands Trust) and the Town of Rochester. The property includes over 450 linear feet of frontage on Doggett Brook and critical woodland, wetland and wildlife habitat. The entire site is within an area classified by the Natural Heritage & Endangered species program as BioMap Supporting Natural Landscape.
- Conservation Commission staff coordinated the submittal and acquisition of a \$15,000.00 Buzzards Bay National Estuary Program Municipal Mini Grant to upgrade Rochester's GIS parcel coverage to MassGIS Level 3 compliance and digitize wetland boundaries defined on plans accepted pursuant to the MA Wetland Protection Act and Rochester Wetlands Protection Bylaw. A new, more accurate wetlands data layer will be created and distributed for use by the Rochester Conservation Commission, Rochester Assessors' Office, Buzzards Bay NEP, SRPEDD and MassGIS.
- Provided staff support in the review and approval of four (4) Conservation Restrictions under the Rochester Conservation Restriction Program:
 - 54-acres off Vaughn Hill Road - Assessors Map 32, Lot 5 (former Rentumis property) from Town of Marion to the Buzzards Bay Coalition
 - 7.56-acres off Hartley Road, Assessors Map 39, Lot 19 (including an island in Snow's Pond) Dufficy-Lawrence Tract CR to Rochester Land Trust and Buzzards Bay Coalition
 - 28.7-acres off Wolf Island Road, Mattapoisett Assessors Map 20, Lot 4 and Rochester Assessors Map 3, Lot 6, Wolf Island Conservation Area / Town of Rochester CR to Town of Fairhaven and Buzzards Bay Coalition
 - 14.51-acres at 333 Walnut Plain Road, Assessors Map 29, Lots 3, 3B, 3F & 3G, Old Haskell Farm (Ben Gilmore) CR to Rochester Land Trust and Buzzards Bay Coalition

The Conservation Restriction Program involves coordination between the Conservation Commission, Board of Assessors and Board of Selectmen.

- Conservation Commission staff coordinated with the Old Colony Regional Technical Vocational High School Committee and Benjamin Forestry Services in preparation of two forest stewardship plans in accordance with the Massachusetts

Forest Stewardship Program. Plans were prepared for the 17.6-acre Town Forest property owned by the Town of Rochester, and the 45-acre Old Colony Regional Technical Vocational High School property.

- Conservation Commission staff provided technical support to the Rochester Country Fair Committee by researching grants and flagging wetlands on the Town owned Pine Street property.
- Conservation Commission staff and members worked towards completion of a walking trail guide highlighting permanently protected lands in the Town of Rochester. The trail guide is a collaborative project involving the Rochester Conservation Commission, Rochester Land Trust and Open Space Action Committee.
- Completed the acquisition of a 10.7-acre parcel off Wolf Island Road, designated as Map 3, Lot 6. The property includes over 600 feet of direct frontage on the Mattapoissett River and a variety of important riparian wetland habitats. The total purchase price of the property was \$20,506 after a Conservation Restriction was granted to the Town of Fairhaven. The Town of Rochester closed on the property on December 20, 2011.
- Completed transfer of 8.84-acres at the Rochester Memorial School (RMS) from the Town of Rochester to the Rochester Conservation Commission to permanently protect an area deemed to be habitat of the eastern box turtle by the MA Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP). This transfer was a requirement of the NHESP and was a tradeoff for approximately 5–acres of mapped eastern box turtle habitat that was altered for the creation of RMS parking, drainage and ball fields.
- Conservation Commission staff serves as Rochester’s representative on the Buzzards Bay Action Committee, Mattapoissett River Valley Water Supply Protection Advisory Committee, Mattapoissett River Valley Water District Commission, Watershed Protection Committee of The Coalition for Buzzards Bay and Massachusetts Pesticide Board.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemary T. Smith, Chairperson 2014

Dr. John Teal, Vice-Chairman, 2013

Kevin Cassidy, 2014

Chris Post, 2013

Judy Schaaf, 2013

Christopher York, 2012

Laurene Gerrior, 2014

Patrice LaForest, Board Administrator
Laurell J. Farinon, Conservation Agent