

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](http://www.wanderer.com).

2013 Filings under the Wetlands Protection Act and Rochester Wetlands By-law

The Conservation Commission held 13 meetings in the year 2013. The following is a summary of the number of applications received and formal actions by the Commission in 2013:

<u>PERMITS</u>	
Notice of Intent Applications	4
Requests for Determination of Applicability	10
Amended Order of Conditions	0
Extension Permits	0
Certificates of Compliance	6
Enforcement Orders	0

## **Land Management and Stewardship**

### Doggett's Brook Recreational Area

Applied for and received approval from the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program to improve trails, erect signage, manage invasive plant species and level and spread abandoned loam piles in the trailhead area. The Wildlands Trust, Rochester Land Trust and Town of Rochester collaborated on a management plan to clear and improve storm damage to the existing loop trail on the Town and Wildlands Trust properties. A kiosk has been installed and work has begun on boundary fencing and trail markers.

### Leonard's Pond Canoe Cartop Boat Access

Thanks to the work of the Rochester Highway Department, a canoe/cartop boat access and parking area were constructed at the 4.1-acre town owned property off Mary's Pond Road. The Commission plans to install fencing and a kiosk in 2014.

### Forest Management at Town Forest and Old Colony Vocational Technical High School

The Rochester Conservation Commission worked in collaboration with Old Colony in hiring forester Phil Benjamin to prepare forest stewardship plans for the 17.62-acre Town Forest and 20+ acres of forest surrounding Old Colony. A public informational workshop entitled "Walk & Talk with Foresters Phil Benjamin and Tom Farrell" was held on November 16, 2013. The initial pilot program will include a logging trail off the rear easterly Old Colony parking lot and cutting in the western portion of the Town Forest in early 2014.

## **2013 Conservation Commission Accomplishments**

- \* Collaborated with the Rochester Land Trust, Inc. and Open Space Action Committee in the design and printing of *Explore Rochester* - Rochester's first ever trail guide of 13 select permanently protected properties. The trail guide contains trail maps, descriptions, photographs and points of interest along the trails of thirteen properties throughout Rochester. The 52 page color guide includes information on many miles of public trails in Rochester that provide great opportunities for walking, hiking, birding, fishing, cross country skiing, and horseback riding. Hard copies of the *Explore Rochester* trail guide are available free of charge, by request, at the Rochester Town Hall Annex, 37 Marion Road, Rochester, MA 02270.
  
- \* Applied for and received a \$20,000 grant from the Buzzards Bay National Estuary Program to hire an engineering consultant to conduct a land survey and prepare compiled plans necessary to divide and permanently protect the 47.81-acre McCarty property off New Bedford Road in Rochester. The subject property supports two agricultural fields totaling 11.6-acres, two ponds, an intermittent stream, bordering vegetated wetland, flood plain, and over 700 linear feet of frontage on Dexter Mill Brook.

- \* Co-ordinated the submittal and acquisition of a \$5,000 Makepeace Neighborhood Fund grant for enhancement of the Doggett's Brook Recreational Area property
- \* Co-ordinated update of Rochester's GIS parcel layer for use by the Commission, all Town departments and boards, SRPEDD, and state agencies.
- \* Provided staff support in the review and approval of two Conservation Restrictions under the Rochester Conservation Restriction Program:
  - o 9.73-acres off Marion Road – Hathaway Dam Property -Assessors Map 8, Lot 22 from Beaton's Inc. to The Trustees of Reservations
  - o 29.61-acres off Marion Road, Doggett's Brook Property, Assessors Map 6, Lot 20A from the Town of Rochester to the Rochester Land Trust, Inc.
- \* Sponsored an article at the fall Special Town Meeting recommending the adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA). The CPA is State-enabling legislation that allows towns to strategically identify and protect community assets. The Commission proposed a 1 % CPA surcharge tax including a \$100,000.00 exclusion on all properties, low-income exemption, and moderate/low income senior exemption. The Commission prepared an informational brochure that was mailed to all Rochester residents. The initiative lost at town meeting.
- \* Staff served 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.

#### Appreciation and Assistance

The Rochester Conservation Commission greatly acknowledges the assistance of the following organizations and personnel that saved the Town a great deal of money through their efforts:

- Rochester Land Trust for work at the Doggett's Brook property  
Special Thanks to Russ Keeler, David Smith, Norene Hartley, Wendy Keeler
- The Wildlands Trust for work at the Robinson Gilmore Preserve and the Doggett's Brook properties
- Adrian Anhorn – UMASS graduate student for preparation of MET grant application

- Jeffrey Eldridge, Rochester Highway Surveyor and Rochester Highway Department personnel for work on Leonard's Pond project
- Old Colony Regional Vocational Technical High School for printing of the Explore Rochester Trail Guide and work on forestry flyers

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemary T. Smith, Chairperson

Dr. John Teal, Vice-Chairman

Kevin Cassidy

Laurene Gerrior

Chris Post

Judy Schaaf

Christopher York

Patrice LaForest, Board Administrator

Laurell J. Farinon, Conservation Agent