

2014 Conservation Commission & Town Forest Committee Annual Report

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.

2014 Wetland Protection Act and Rochester Wetlands By-law Administration

The Conservation Commission held 17 meetings in the year 2014. The following is a summary of the number of applications received and formal actions by the Commission in 2014:

<u>PERMITS</u>	
Notice of Intent Applications	6
Requests for Determination of Applicability	14
Abbreviated Notice of Resource	
Area Delineation (ANRAD)	3
Amended Order of Conditions	2
Certificates of Compliance	6
Emergency Certifications	2
Notice of Violations	3

The Rochester Conservation Commission issued Emergency Certifications for the following two projects:

- Shawmut Associates – culvert collapse at 50 Cranberry Highway
- Rochester Highway Department – emergency culvert repair off Hartley Road near old mill ruin

The Rochester Conservation Commission received an application for vegetation management of Phragmites from a private property owner on Snipatuit Pond. The applicant proposed mechanical harvesting and chemical treatment of Phragmites. Great care was taken to review and approve the project with conditions to ensure adequate protection of pond water quality.

Approval was granted for exploratory test well exploration to the Town of Marion for property off New Bedford Road adjacent to its existing well site.

Land Management and Stewardship



Doggett's Brook Recreational Area

The grand opening of the Doggetts Brook Trail was held on Saturday, September 13, 2014. Over 60 residents attended and viewed the new trailhead display case, kiosk and newly improved trails. The opening culminated a multi-year effort by the Town of Rochester and Rochester Land Trust to link existing town owned lands to the 30-acre Lincoln Holmes Memorial Woods which is owned by The Wildlands Trust. Thanks to a generous grant from the Makepeace Neighborhood Fund, the trailhead is marked by a display case, kiosk, signage and fencing.

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. Old Colony Regional Vocational Technical High School constructed a kiosk for the site. Town Facilities Manager Andrew Daniel installed the new kiosk and constructed and installed a fence at the entrance and parking area. Funding was provided by a grant from the Makepeace Neighborhood Fund. The new boat access is very popular and used by many.

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

In February 2014, Dan Reed Logging Company selectively cut trees within the pilot project area off the rear easterly parking lot on Old Colony and Rochester Town Forest land. By selective cutting and careful management, the area will ultimately be more productive and will provide diverse wildlife habitat. 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 Portable Sawmill Demonstration was conducted for Old Colony carpentry students, abutters and interested residents on May 9, 2014. DCR Forester Sean Mahoney and foresters Phil Benjamin and Tom Farrell made the presentation.



Environmental Planning

Dexter Mill Brook Land Preservation Project

The Town of Rochester went out to bid and hired John Libby Consulting 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.

- * Coordinated MapGeo Browser – web mapping interface located on Town’s website for use by residents and staff.
- * Co-ordinated the submittal and acquisition of a \$1,500 Makepeace Neighborhood Fund grant on behalf of the Agricultural Commission for Right to Farm signs and brochures
- * Co-ordinated update of Rochester’s GIS parcel layer for use by the Commission, all Town departments and boards, SRPEDD, and state agencies.
- * 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 Commission was saddened by the passing of Ben Gilmore, former Conservation Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Board of Health and Land Trust member. The Commission observed a moment of silence in his memory at the start of its meeting on November 18, 2014.

In July 2014 longtime member Judy Schaaf resigned from the Commission. The Commission welcomed back former Commission member and Water Commissioner Michael Conway, who was appointed by the Board of Selectmen in August 2014.

The Rochester Conservation Commission greatly acknowledges the assistance of the following organizations and personnel:

- Rochester Land Trust for work at the Doggett's Brook property
Special Thanks to Russ Keeler, David Smith, Norene Hartley, Wendy Keeler
- Jeffrey Eldridge, Highway Superintendent and the Rochester Highway Department
- Andrew Daniel, Facilities Manager for work on the Leonard's Pond and Doggetts Brook projects
- The Wildlands Trust for work at the Doggetts Brook property
- Sarah Williams of the Buzzards Bay National Estuary Program
- Makepeace Neighborhood Fund

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemary T. Smith, Chairperson
Dr. John Teal, Vice-Chairman
Kevin Cassidy
Michael Conway
Laurene Gerrior
Chris Post
Christopher York

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