



## **Rochester Conservation Commission & Town Forest Committee**

Town Hall Annex, 37 Marion Road, Rochester MA 02770

Phone: 508-763-5421 Fax: 508-763-5379

### 2020 Annual Report

The year 2020 proved to be a very busy year due to the number of applications for large scale residential and solar projects in the Town of Rochester. Due to Covid-19, starting in April 2020 the Commission met remotely using Zoom throughout the year. Despite remote distancing challenges, the Commission and staff performed site visits and completed technical review and approval with conditions of the following major projects:

- Rochester Crossroads – 208 residential units and commercial project off Route 28
- Village at Plumb Corner – 22 duplex age-related community in the center of Rochester
- Seaboard Solar – 11 MW ground-mounted solar project off Old Middleboro Road
- Eldredge Bogs – Agricultural Canal and 1.5 MW Solar Canopy off Pierce Street
- Clean Energy Collective – 1.34 MW ground-mounted solar project off Sarah Sherman Road
- Braley Hill Road, LLC – 9.5 MW ground-mounted solar project off Braley Hill Road

### Members & Purpose

Rochester has a long history of preserving important ecological, agricultural, cultural and water supply related lands for future generations. The Town of Rochester established the Conservation Commission & Town Forest Committee ("Commission") in 1963 under the Conservation Commission Act.

The Commission is responsible for protecting Rochester's natural resources, managing the Town Forest and conservation lands, administering the Massachusetts and Town Wetland Protection statutes, and advising other municipal officials and boards on conservation and environmental matters.

The Rochester Conservation Commission office is located at the Town Hall Annex at 37 Marion Road; office hours are Monday 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Tuesday through Thursday 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Friday 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. 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 beginning at 7:00 p.m. at the Rochester Town Hall Conference Room or Council on Aging.

## Commission Staff

The Environmental Planner/Conservation Agent and Board Administrator work under the direction of the Conservation Commission and provide support, coordination, and professional management for the Conservation Commission in carrying out its mission to protect Rochester's natural resources. Commission staff assists landowners, developers, applicants, engineers and the general public in providing due diligence information and professional advice on the Wetlands Protection Act and Rochester Wetlands Protection Bylaw. Commission staff assists the Commission in planning, acquisition, administration and management of municipal conservation land conservation restrictions.

## 2020 Wetland Protection Act and Rochester Wetlands By-law Filings

The Conservation Commission held 24 meetings in the year 2020. The following is a summary of the applications received and formal actions by the Commission in 2020:

<u>Permits/Actions</u>	
Building Permit Interdepartmental Review	81
Board of Health Percolation Review	30
RDA Applications	13
Notice of Intent Applications	12
Certificates of Compliance	15
ANRAD Wetland Delineation Review	3
Extension Permits	1
Enforcement Orders	2
Emergency Certifications	1
Chapter 61 Right of First Refusals	5

## 2020 Conservation Commission Actions/Accomplishments:

- Applied for and received a \$20,946 Buzzards Bay National Estuary Program Municipal Mini-grant for the Stuart Bog Cedar Swamp Land Preservation Project to purchase and permanently protect the 232-acre Decas Cranberry Company Stuart Bog property will provide a critical connection to a landlocked parcel owned by the Rochester Conservation Commission (12-acres) and the White Cedar Preserve (83-acres) owned by the Rochester Land Trust, Inc. This project will result in the permanent protection of 200-acres of extensive bordering vegetated wetland and floodplain, including cranberry bogs (65-acres) and Atlantic White Cedar Swamp. A significant portion of the property is located within BioMap 2 Core Habitat (119-acres) and BioMap 2 Critical Natural Landscape (193-acres).
- Released a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to hire a peer review engineering consultant to advise the Commission on technical projects. The Commission received a number of responses and voted to hire the top three ranked companies: BSC, Environmental Partners, and Horsley & Witten Group.
- Adopted formal policies related to ANRAD plan requirements, re-advertising/continuance requirements, and tree removal application guidelines.
- Commission Members and Staff Conducted Field Site Visits on Weekends Throughout the Year to Review Proposed Projects and Monitor Construction Activity

- Updated MapGeo Browser – web mapping interface located on Town’s website for use by residents and staff.
- Co-ordinated update of Rochester’s GIS parcel layer for use by the Commission, all Town departments and boards, SRPEDD, and state agencies.
- Reviewed DCR Forest Cutting Plans for Rochester projects and communicated with state and local foresters on projects.
- Staff served as Rochester’s representative on Southeast Regional Planning & Economic Development District (SRPEDD), as Flood Plain Coordinator, on the Buzzards Bay Action Committee, Mattapoisett River Valley Water Supply Protection Advisory Committee, Mattapoisett River Valley Water District Commission, Watershed Protection Committee of The Coalition for Buzzards Bay and Massachusetts Pesticide Board.
- Updated the Board of Selectmen and town departments on proposed changes to FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Conway, Chairman  
Dan Gagne, Vice-Chairman  
Léna Bourque  
Christopher Gerrior  
Maggie Payne  
Kevin Thompson

Tanya Ventura, Board Administrator

Marissa Perez-Dormitzer, Recording Secretary

Laurell J. Farinon, Environmental Planner/Conservation Agent