

BOSCAWEN CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Annual Report • 2006

The Commission (BCC) conducted a special Town Forest Day in October. Kevin Gardner, renowned author and stonewall builder guided visitors through the Boscawen Town Forest and explained the many unique and historical stone structures including culverts, spring houses, foundations, and walls. Jim Garvin, NH Division of Historical Resources was also there and provided commentary and background information. Thank you to new Commissioner, Kathy Smith, for identifying and securing this wonderful presenter for our Town Forest Day. Despite the lack of snow, the Commission also conducted a successful Full Moon Snowshoe/Cross-country Ski Night in January.

In May, Merrimack Valley High School students worked at the Town Forest as part of their community service day. Students and teachers cleaned the trailhead area, brushed trails, and performed other maintenance.

All-terrain vehicles (ATVs) operated in the Town Forest continue to be a management challenge for the Commission. Motorized, wheeled vehicles are not allowed in the Forest. Hiking, cycling, snowmobiling, bird watching, and hunting and trapping consistent with state law are allowed. The Commission is working with the Boscawen Police Department and the NH Fish and Game Department to enforce the ATV ban. Please respect these use restrictions so that the Commission can continue to manage the Town Forest with minimal cost to all of us. The Commission hopes that you will visit your Town Forest and enjoy its many natural and historical features.

This year, the Commission wrote a pre-proposal to the NH Department of Environmental Services Watershed Assistance Grants Program to reduce or eliminate erosion at the Jamie Welch canoe launch site. The Commission continued work with the Boscawen Board of Selectmen to submit a final budget and proposal that was funded by the Department. The Commission, Selectmen, Public Works Director, Town Administrator, and the Town's engineering firm worked together to design a project that would restore the natural condition of the river, reduce or eliminate erosion of soils into the river, and re-grade the parking lot to re-direct runoff—all while continuing to provide access for canoes, kayaks, and "car top" boats. Thank you to the NH Department of Environmental Services, the Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator, Public Works Director, and the voters who made this collaborative project possible.

The Commission continued its annual monitoring of the Land Conservation Investment Program (LCIP) easements on the Cummings (formerly Sahlin) and Jones (formerly Emery) properties. These model landowners provide the many benefits of open space on their lands, including wildlife habitat, lowest possible community services, timber and agricultural production, hiking, hunting, and the beauty of the working landscapes of open fields and forests that preserve rural character and make Boscawen the best town in which to live.

Work continued with the Crete Family and others who have expressed a desire to place conservation easements on their lands. With the Conservation Fund and a grant that the Boscawen Conservation Commission applied for from the US Department of Agriculture Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program, the Town has several opportunities to conserve open space, support working landscapes, and help control the cost of town services and our tax bills.

The Commission reviewed and commented on numerous permits and a variety of proposals and responded to requests for inspections including applications for sand and gravel pit operations, wetlands dredging and filling, alteration of terrain, illegal dumping, land clearing, intents to cut and excavate materials, reports of wood and timber cut or materials excavated, and numerous commercial and residential applications and proposals. The Commission also worked with the Boscawen Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment to provide subdivision and other application reviews. The Commission purchased a digital camera to help it better document these site visits and inspections. The BCC provided letters of support for the Friends of the Northern Rail Trail in Merrimack County and the Effingham Conservation Commission amicus brief. Commissioners participated in the NH Association of Conservation Commissions Annual Meeting and attended a land use conference.

Plans for 2007 include updating and expanding its website through a contract with yellahoose.com. The expanded website will include wonderful images from throughout Boscawen, a directory from which to download trail maps and other reference documents, forms to submit wildlife sightings and other information, links to other conservation resources. The Commission will continue to work with owners who approach the Commission about conserving their lands and to monitor the LCIP easements on the Cummings and Jones properties. The Commission will conduct its Full Moon Snowshoe and Ski nights in January and February (and March if snow cover permits). New kiosks are planned for the Town Forest. The Commission looks forward to continued work with Merrimack Valley High School to conduct Community Service Day in May. The BCC will continue to solicit a Boscawen student for a conservation camp scholarship by drafting and submitting a short essay on why they want to participate in the weeklong camp. The successful candidate will be asked to present a summary of his or her experiences and acquired knowledge and skills at a BCC meeting. Past conservation camp scholarship winners included a young man who volunteered for several years and initiated projects with the Commission. The BCC will again be soliciting applications for the college Conservation Scholarship program. The small scholarship is open to Boscawen residents who are pursuing a career in natural resource conservation. Further information on both scholarships will be published in the "Conservation Corner" in the *Boscawen Newsvine* or visit boscawencc.org.

Each month a different member of the BCC writes an article featuring different activities of the Commission and other natural resource issues for the "Conservation Corner" column in the *Boscawen Newsvine*.

The BCC elected the following slate of officers: Michele L. Tremblay, Chair; Mike Jette, Vice-chair and Treasurer; and Mark Ciarametaro, Secretary. Kristine Taylor will continue to provide administrative services under contract to the Commission.

Thank you to former Commissioner Ray Powelson for his many years of service. Ray moved to Concord in 2006 but was a long-time dedicated member of the Commission for over ten years. Ray served in the officer roles of Secretary and Vice-chair and provided countless hours of leadership and hands-on work in the Boscawen Town Forest. Thanks also to Ernie Jones for his interest in and service on the Commission. The Commission also extends its gratitude to Chris Lawrie who has volunteered with the Commission and has worked in the Town Forest.

The Commission extends a warm welcome to new Alternate Commissioner, Bill Caswell. Bill has been a wonderful volunteer and dedicated Commission meeting participant. He was appointed to the Alternate position this year. Kathy Smith has served as an Alternate Commissioner and was appointed to a regular Commissioner position this year. The Commission currently has an open regular member position. Regular and alternate membership on the Commission is open to all town residents. Associate membership is open to anyone who does not wish to commit to full membership on the BCC but wants a more formalized affiliation. Associate members and other individuals are welcome to attend meetings and serve on sub-committees. The chair extends her sincerest gratitude to the dedicated Commissioners who provide the energy, ideas, and leadership for its work.

The Boscawen Conservation Commission meets in the Town Office Complex on the fourth Thursday of each month at 7:00 PM. The meetings are open to the public and all are welcome to attend. Volunteers are always invited to help with trail work, serve on sub-committees, and participate in other conservation activities. As always, the Commission thanks the citizens of Boscawen for their support of conservation. Your ideas and feedback are welcomed and encouraged. For further information on the Commission or to provide your feedback, please call Michele Tremblay, Chair at 796.2615, email the Commission at boscawencc@tds.net, or visit boscawencc.org.

Respectfully submitted

Michele L. Tremblay
Chair