

REPORT OF THE BOSCAWEN CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Annual Report • 2009

Your Boscawen Conservation Commission (BCC) hosted and convened meetings of the Agricultural Commission Exploratory Group (AGEC) after the New Hampshire Legislature created an opportunity for towns and cities to create agricultural commissions to provide an organized and local voice for agriculture. The first meeting was held at the Boscawen Public Library. Erick Sawtelle from the Town of Lee—the first municipality to establish an agricultural commission—John Porter, well-known dairy expert, and other agricultural volunteers and professionals offered their perspectives and experiences. Since then, several other municipalities, including Webster, have established commissions and learned that they are a tremendous resource to members of the agricultural and forestry community and to their municipal boards. For instance, an agricultural commission can provide expert advice on land use ordinances that are friendly toward farming and forestry. A healthy number of town residents participated in the AGECEC and hosted a booth and float at Old Home Day in August. The float won an award and the booth provided information and opportunities for feedback about agricultural commissions. An article to form a commission has been placed on your 2010 Town Meeting warrant to establish an Agricultural Commission in Boscawen.

The BCC and the Town worked together to draft and submit a funding application to the US Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service to fund a conservation easement for the lands that are part of the Silver Farm on Water Street. The BCC contracted for an appraisal of the property to determine its full value and that of the proposed conservation easement land. The proposal was funded but unfortunately, the heirs could not come to consensus to move forward and the project did not proceed.

Several members of the Conservation Commission participated in the new Combined Land Use Boards Integration Team (CLUBIT) that was formed to better communicate and coordinate the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Adjustment, and Conservation Commission activities to serve our town and applicants. The Team met to discuss streamlining processes and maximizing our volunteer talent and resources. As one of its first integrated activities, the commission reviewed outdoor lighting model ordinances and made recommendations to the Planning Board. The Commission extends its gratitude to Alan Hardy, who faithfully participates in BCC meetings and provides an invaluable communication and coordination role between all of our boards, commissions, committees, and departments. Alan is very knowledgeable and has been a tremendous asset to the BCC.

Ruth Smith, a naturalist from Canterbury, provided a program called “Walk Like a Detective” at the annual Town Forest Day in October. The group of over two dozen participants learned to read the stories that vegetation, animals, and rocks tell about the landscape and our management of it. The Commission conducted its Full Moon Cross-country Ski/Snowshoe/Hike nights as a way to learn to love the cold nights of the winter. The Merrimack Valley High School students worked with faculty to maintain trails and the kiosk area. The Commission hopes that you will visit your Town Forest and enjoy its many natural and historical features. Be sure to sign the guest book/trail register in the mailbox at the parking area. Your Commissioners read this register and consider all of your observations and suggestions in the Commission’s management and planning.

The Upper Merrimack River Local Advisory Committee (UMRLAC) presented the benefits of the Wild & Scenic Rivers Partnership Program to the Commission. The program has been very successful in the Lamprey River area of New Hampshire with significant financial support of recreational projects

such as trails, river access, and parks, as well as funding for conservation projects with willing landowners. If designated, the upper Merrimack would receive funding for its own projects to support river recreation and access as well as voluntary land conservation projects. The Commission voted to send a letter of support to the UMLAC.

The Commission continues 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.

Although we are arguably in the midst of an economic downturn, the Commission was busy reviewing and commenting on permit applications 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, snowmobile trail informal proposals, and numerous commercial and residential applications and proposals. The Commission reviewed and commented on large development proposals, intents to cut, and intents to excavate along with the reports of the timber cut and resources extracted.

The BCC elected the following slate of officers: Michele L. Tremblay, Chair; Kathy Smith, Vice-chair and Treasurer; and Mark Ciarametaro, Secretary. Thanks to the officers as to the commissioners and alternates including Lisa Bissonnette, Jim Colby, Norm LaPierre, and David Mudge. The Commission also extends its gratitude to Chris Lawrie who continues his wonderful and generous volunteer service to the Commission and our Town. This year, Chris worked with Commissioners on trail and other management activities in the Town Forest and built a beautiful new kiosk that will be erected at the former Weir Farm this spring. Thanks to Alice Kraft who had attended meetings and provided notetaking services for the BCC and moved out of town this year.

The Commission's website includes color images from throughout Boscawen, a directory from which to download trail maps and other reference documents, an events calendar, forms to submit wildlife sightings and other information, and links to other conservation resources. The Commission hopes that you will find this website helpful and visit it often to provide your wildlife sightings and suggestions for resources.

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*.

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 this important service to the Town.

The Boscawen Conservation Commission meets in the Town Office Complex on the fourth Thursday of each month at 7:00 PM (except for November and December when it is the third Thursday). 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 for our Town. 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 commission@boscawencc.org, or visit www.BoscawenCC.org.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele L. Tremblay
Chair