

REPORT OF THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

“The Plainfield Conservation Award commends an individual who has demonstrated outstanding stewardship of Plainfield’s natural resources and open space lands, and by their example and actions, gives all residents the opportunity to appreciate these assets. The Plainfield Conservation Commission presents this award to Ira “Ike” Townsend on this day, July 4, 2006.” So reads the inscription describing the award and recipient on the occasion of the inaugural Plainfield Conservation Award. Much more could be written, but from leading kids around the woods or coaching them off a ski jump, to donating, with his family, land conservation easements replete with impeccably groomed trails, Ira Townsend embodies the spirit of this award.

The conservation commission was also proud to support the Plainfield Community Bridge Project; and even more proud of the group of residents - Plainfield Trailblazers old and new - who conceived of, raised funds for, and then built a fantastic bridge near the Plainfield Elementary School that allows students and the rest of us access to various natural communities found in the floodplain and amongst the ledges across the brook. The bridge will prove to be the best access to the town-owned Townsend Lot and provide another starting point for hikers destined for the top of French’s Ledges. Townsend footprints have been made in this area for half a century or more, and the bridge has fittingly been named the “Ira and Sara Townsend Bridge”. At the memorable dedication ceremony, the entire student body was introduced to the Townsends before everyone paraded to the ribbon cutting and around a short loop trail before returning to school.

The bridge site and a significant portion of these trails are on land owned by Kimball Union Academy, and they very generously have donated an easement to the town which guarantees us a right to these uses forever. It is beyond the scope of this report to mention all the local people and businesses who contributed, but it was a community project in the truest sense of the word. The foresight shown by our selectmen in the acquisition and terms of this easement should not be overlooked. The conservation commission will monitor the condition of the bridge and trails, and in the unlikely event that the Trailblazers don’t beat us to it, coordinate any required maintenance.

The Forest Maintenance Fund had a year-end balance of \$21,952, although \$5000 of this was committed at town meeting to identify and mark boundaries on town-owned land. The conservation commission, after consultation with the selectmen to prioritize our list, decided the aforementioned Townsend Lot, just across the Brook from the school and below French’s Ledges, needed the most attention and engaged the services of Rollins Land Survey to undertake this complex task. We plan to continue this project on the next properties in line and will be asking voters to approve another \$5000 expenditure from the fund at town meeting. The source of these funds was income from a timber harvest completed in the year 2000 at the Benson Town Forest.

The Conservation Fund will have a balance of \$80,512, a figure which includes 50% of the 2005 and 2006 penalties for converting open space land in current use to developed land that had not yet been deposited into the fund. Voters reaffirmed their support for this 50-50 formula for distributing the penalty funds when a proposal to reduce the percentage was rejected at town meeting by a comfortable margin. We do infer from this that the majority of townspeople will support steps we take in partnership with willing landowners to

conserve our best farm and forest land, water supplies, wildlife habitat, and other landscape features. If you see any possibility that you would like to play a role in this process, please contact the conservation commission.

Two members represent the conservation commission on the Natural Resource Inventory Committee. The inventory describes various natural resources and accompanying maps illustrate each resource's distribution within the town. Sections on groundwater sources, surface waters and watersheds, wetlands, agricultural lands, and conserved lands are among the natural resources being included in the initial inventory. The basic purposes of the Inventory are to provide information to our residents, help prioritize conservation efforts, and support the town's master plan. The initial basic inventory will be finished in early 2007.

In September, The Nature Conservancy requested our assistance to cover a portion of the expenses associated with a conservation easement that may be donated to that organization. The conservation commission considered The Nature Conservancy's request at a public hearing in October, and agreed to make a donation of \$5000 from the conservation fund, contingent upon resolution of public access issues. Unfortunately, in spite of the property's important and unique natural communities, these issues could not be resolved and in November the commission declined to proceed with our offer. It is more important than ever that we receive guidance from residents when we consider supporting easement projects with expenditures from the conservation fund. We will try to do a better job publicizing our public hearings, but let us know if you would like to be notified directly.

Toward the end of the year, the conservation commission became a sounding board for the planning board as the latter group fleshed out a proposal to include provisions for wetland and water body setbacks and vegetated buffers in the zoning ordinance. There is little dispute that it is best to buffer these resources from the impacts of future development, but the commission cautioned the planning board that such an ordinance needed to be carefully crafted to fairly and practically accomplish its' intended result. At year's end, this was still a work in progress.

There were changes in the composition of the commission this year. John Taylor set the standard for due diligence in the performance of the duties of a conservation commissioner for six years and his departure is a loss for the town. John will surely continue to put lots of that energy into our local trail system. Another silver lining was the appointment of Eric Brann to fill the vacancy. Some of you know Eric as one of the parents who pitched in and helped their kids make improvements to the ball field in front of the elementary school. Eric has a calm, well reasoned, and assured manner - excellent qualities in a NH State Trooper and a in a conservation commissioner.

Our meeting minutes are now being posted on the town's website at www.plainfieldnh.org.

Respectfully Submitted,

David Grobe, Chairman
Conservation Commission



Conservation Commission Chairman David Grobe and Upper Valley Land Trust Stewardship Manager Jay Waldner Monitoring the Benson Forest property

RECREATION COMMISSION

This past year was both saddened and challenging with the loss of our Recreation Director, Mr. George T. Prescott. George established the Plainfield Recreation Program about 20 years ago and has been a very dedicated and respected individual in the community. His main objective was to have a program that the youth in the community could participate in, learn from, and enjoy. I believe he did just that. He has been a great friend and mentor. He has been and will continue to be greatly missed. In his memory, this commission is looking forward to continuing what George started some many years ago. We look forward to your input as we move on.

We, the commission, are currently meeting on a monthly basis and we now have a web site available with sign-up forms, schedules, directions, meeting minutes, and general information, as well as a link to contact us. We hope this will help with communication in the future. The web site is www.plainfieldnh.org/recomm/recomm.html.

Our baseball and softball program had a very rough season. With the rainy weather, many games and practices were cancelled. Although we cannot control the weather, the commission is currently in discussions and the planning stages for this coming season so that the weather will have the least possible impact.

The annual fishing derby was held in early June and the rain continued. Although the weather was poor, the participation was still very good. We had about 90 participants and all had good luck as the fish were biting well. The grill was going and food and drinks were available to all.

T-ball had 35 participants for grades 1 and 2 and an additional 22 for a kindergarten group. They worked on basic skills and grades 1 and 2 played games with each of the other teams.

We had 23 kids sign up for our tennis program with several skill levels. Our very important swimming program was well attended and enjoyed by 58 children ranging from beginners to experienced swimmers.