

REPORT OF THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

It should be expected that an idealistic and optimistic Conservation Commission will tilt at an occasional windmill. Even though several of our activities bordered on the quixotic, we had at least a small measure of actual success with most during 2008.

In the past year Plainfield witnessed more road construction than usual. Because of the potential impact on our surface waters and wetlands, the Conservation Commission loosely monitors construction and maintenance projects, two of which required permits from the State of New Hampshire. We devoted one meeting to site visits, and members reported on and discussed road work at several other meetings. The Commission came to feel that our highway department could set an example for all contractors and asked the Board of Selectmen to adopt a policy that construction and maintenance of our roads and operations at the highway garage or town gravel pit be practiced in ways which minimize environmental impacts. We were encouraged by the Selectboard's response and appreciated many instances where the road crew was already keeping the impacts of their work to a minimum.

The Conservation Commission continues to be concerned about the relentless invasion of alien plant species infiltrating our borders and compromising the livelihood of our familiar native plants. In the past, we have taken credit for attempts to control buckthorn and honeysuckle at the Benson Town Forest but have not been able to hoist the "mission accomplished" banner. This year we thought we would try to take one very small step to prevent the spread of Japanese Knotweed in one roadside location. Our preferred treatment option, the application of herbicide, is highly regulated and, while an option for individual landowners, is generally not an option for the Conservation Commission. One landowner did indeed receive a permit to apply herbicides in the wetland jurisdiction elsewhere in town. A second treatment option, the use of manual labor, can be intensive and usually requires an ongoing commitment to succeed. Again, this is best undertaken by the individual landowner, and several residents are doing so. We are available to assist residents in identification of invasive species and provide information about control options.

The boundary marking project at the town-owned Townsend Lot is now complete and paid for, with \$18,635 left in the Forest Maintenance Fund. Laminated maps of this and other town properties can be viewed at the town office or libraries, requested in electronic .pdf format, and may eventually be available in that format on the Conservation Commission's page at www.plainfieldnh.org.

The parking lot upgrade at Victor Hewes Memorial Park is also now complete and will be paid for using the Conservation Fund. This fund was credited with one-half the Current Use change penalties received in 2007, amounting to \$14,465, bringing the balance to \$113,211 less the \$3000 cost of the parking lot. Land conservation efforts made possible by this fund should reflect the values of our residents, so look for an opportunity to help provide this direction in the coming year!

We continued to assist landowners, loggers, and contractors with wetland permitting questions and applications. Two residents received permits to build ponds, one resident received information on building a pond, and two residents received information on maintaining a pond. A pond workshop presented at Taylor Farm by the Sullivan County Conservation District was very well attended. Three residents received Forestry Notification permits, and the Town received a permit for culvert replacement on the Brook Road reconstruction project. We also tracked the streambank stabilization project at the Plainfield Elementary School which had been permitted in 2007. A riparian buffer will be planted in 2009 to complete this project.

The Conservation Commission fulfilled our easement monitoring responsibilities on four properties for the Conservation Land Stewardship Program and one for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. We inspected the Ira and Sara Townsend Bridge. Two trailhead kiosks were purchased using monies from the Townsend Bridge and Trail Fund. The first one has been installed by the Plainfield Elementary School parking lot and will house necessary information on the trail system.

The event we most enjoyed was presenting Julian Bellavance with the Plainfield Conservation Award. It is hard to miss his beautiful property in East Plainfield where cattle graze, local hockey stars skated up and down the pond, and neighbors enjoy the open fields and tended forests. We had tried to find a public occasion for the presentation, and thought we were settling for something less when we ventured to his farmhouse in October. In that quiet and unhurried setting we were able to get a much fuller picture of Julian's half-century connection to the land.

Last and very far from least, we welcomed Judy Hallam's appointment to the Conservation Commission. Ten years ago, Judy was a central figure in the Town's acquisition of the Farnum Lot Town Forest. In my tenure as chair, I can recall no new member more willing to be put to work. Her interest in land conservation will be much appreciated.

Respectfully Submitted,

David Grobe, Chairman
Conservation Commission
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