

Guilford Conservation Commission Annual Report 2014

The Guilford Conservation Commission (GCC) was formed in 2000. Our mission is

...to identify, inventory, foster education about, and help protect Guilford's natural, scenic, recreational, historic, educational, cultural, architectural, agricultural, and archaeological resources for the public good. The commission shall help residents and town officials recognize the value of these resources and administer them for the benefit of future generations.

Current members include Bill Jewell, Linda Hecker, Susan James, Linda Lembke, Rory Lincoln, Karen Murphy, Bevan Quinn, Marli Rabinowitz, with Dick Clark representing the Select Board. We invite members of the community to join a number of working sub-committees, including Natural Resources Inventory, Invasives Planning, and Communication.

In 2014 we continued our focus on "invasives" - invasive plants that are displacing native species and altering the ecological balance in our rural community. In May, we co-hosted with Dummerston CC our second successful Invasive Plant workshop. Over 50 people attended, not only from Guilford, but from neighboring towns, since invasive plants do not acknowledge town boundaries. Bill Guenther, our Windham County Forester and Andrew Morrison, a graduate student from Antioch University, gave informative talks about identifying and dealing with invasive plants. Then we moved outside for field demonstrations by several local experts on how to use mechanical tools such as weed wrenches and pull bars to uproot unwanted plants. In September we co-sponsored with Dummerston a well-attended presentation by a Connecticut state biologist on the relation between invasive plants and ticks. We provided informational tables at Town Meeting and the Guilford Fair and wrote several articles for the *Guilford Gazette*.

We also purchased new resources for our display and lending library about invasive plants.

We provided support to the Town Planning Commission by drafting the Natural Resources sections of the new Town Plan. We were chosen by Windham Regional Commission for a Forest Stewardship grant which provides technical assistance in writing the forest resources sections. We are looking into ways to fund a Natural Resources Inventory which is crucial for establishing a baseline for planning how to best manage and preserve Guilford's valuable natural resources.

We resumed our work on Ancient Roads, conducting extensive research in order to make recommendations to the Select Board about potential additions to the Town Highway map before the deadline in February, 2015, after which the public loses rights of way to any unidentified roads and trails.

Several members attended specialized training sessions at the Association of VT Conservation Commissions annual conference and at Municipal Day in Montpelier, taking advantage of resources at the state and regional levels. We attended a joint regional commission meeting in Putney in March and hosted one in Guilford in November, increasing our collaborative efforts with nearby groups.

We met the challenge of the new Open Meeting Law which went into effect in July, 2014, requiring public posting of meeting agendas and minutes in a timely way. We also communicated with our constituents via Front Porch Forum and the Guilford Gazette.

The Conservation Commission holds regular meetings on the third Thursday of each month and sponsors monthly exploratory walks on Guilford's old roads and special places, usually on Sunday afternoons, to which the public is invited. If you'd like to participate in our activities or join a working committee, contact chair Linda Hecker at lrhecker47@gmail.com