

GUILFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2015

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 of The Guilford Conservation Commission include, Linda Hecker, Susan James, Bill Jewell, Linda Lembke, Rory Lincoln, Gordon Little, Karen Murphy, Bevan Quinn, Marli Rabinowitz, with Gabrielle Ciuffreda representing the Selectboard. We invite members of the community to join a number of working projects, including Natural Resources Inventory, The Andrew Weeks Memorial Forest trail work, and establishment of a Guilford trails committee.

Early in 2015 the Conservation Commission completed extensive research on Ancient Roads, in order to make recommendations to the Selectboard about potential additions to the Town Highway map before the February deadline. We received technical assistance from Eric Morse and Windham Regional Commission. A few trails were added which were formerly Class 4 roads. The Agency of Transportation approved the Town's road changes.

The Conservation Commission applied for and received a \$500 Tiny Grant from the Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions. The purpose of this grant is to rehabilitate the Andrew Weeks Memorial Forest trails. The Weeks Forest contains 175 acres of conserved forest and trails and was donated to the New England Forestry Foundation. It includes a stream and historical landmarks from the 19th century Mineral Springs Farm. The goal is to create a welcoming and clearly marked trail in the center of town, which is accessible to all citizens.

We continued our collaboration with Windham Regional Commission on the Forest Stewardship grant awarded to Guilford and Halifax. Guilford's forests are highly productive and contain significant forest habitats. The Forest Stewardship reports provided interesting information for the Town Plan. The Conservation Commission assisted the Planning Commission in writing the Natural Resources section of the new Town Plan, which was adopted and approved in 2015.

One of the goals contained in the new Town Plan is that Guilford should conduct a Natural Resources Inventory which is crucial for establishing a baseline for planning how to best manage and preserve Guilford's valuable natural resources. The Conservation Commission applied for a Municipal Planning Grant to fund the inventory, however, we did not receive the grant. We will conduct the inventory in smaller steps and find other sources of money. We will also ask citizens to share with us places that are of particular interest to them. This year we will collect existing research and maps on Guilford's lands and waterways.

Guilford Conservation Commission members attended two joint regional conservation commission meetings in 2015, increasing our collaborative efforts with nearby commissions.

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 Guilford community members via Front Porch Forum, the Guilford Gazette, and Town Meeting displays of maps and interesting information.

The Conservation Commission holds regular meetings at 5:00pm on the third Thursday of each month in the Town Office. We sponsor monthly exploratory walks on Guilford's old roads and special places, usually on Sundays, 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
Submitted by Susan James, GCC member