

GUILFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2016

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, Karen Murphy, Bevan Quinn, Marli Rabinowitz, with Gabrielle Ciuffreda representing the Selectboard. We have 1 open position as of January 1, 2017. We invite members of the community to join a number of working projects, including Natural Resources Inventory, trail maintenance in the Andrew Weeks Memorial Forest, and establishing a Guilford trails committee.

Major projects for 2016 included creating a trail guide and other enhancements for the Andrew Weeks Memorial Forest Carriage Trail; applying for a Municipal Planning Grant to support a Natural Resources Inventory; hosting a meeting of regional conservation commissions and related groups in November, 2016. We also participated in a regional meeting held in Newfane in May and in town-wide planning for a community website/calendar.

In 2015 the Conservation Commission applied for and received a \$500 Tiny Grant from the Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions to rehabilitate the Andrew Weeks Memorial Forest trails. The Weeks Forest contains 175 acres of conserved forest and trails donated by the Anthony family to the New England Forestry Foundation. It includes a stream and historical landmarks from the 19th century Mineral Springs Farm. We worked with students from the Guilford School's 6th grade, the Historical Society, and the Anthony family, as well as many community volunteers to create a welcoming, clearly marked trail in the center of town, open to all citizens.

Our work included trail grading and marking, clearing invasive plants, creating guideposts and a brochure highlighting natural and historic information, and several stone benches. We held a gala ribbon-cutting grand opening for the public on July 2, 2016, attended by over 50 citizens and reported on by *The Commons*. The trail has proved to be a popular destination. Guilford Seniors took part in several guided walks. We continue to maintain the trail and plan to add a new bench as a resting point.

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

Guilford Conservation Commission members attended two joint regional conservation commission meetings in 2016, hosting one in November, to increase our collaborative efforts with nearby commissions. We communicate with Guilford community members via Front Porch Forum, the Guilford Gazette, and during Town Meeting with displays of maps and pertinent information.

The Conservation Commission holds regular meetings at 5:00pm on the third Thursday of each month in the Town Office. We sponsor occasional 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 walks, activities or join a working committee, contact chair Linda Hecker at lrhecker47@gmail.com

Submitted by Linda Hecker, GCC chair