

GUILFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2018

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 are Linda Hecker, Susan Bonthron, Bill Jewell, Linda Lembke, Rory Lincoln, Karen Murphy, Bevan Quinn, Marli Rabinowitz, with Gabrielle Ciuffreda representing the Selectboard. We invite members of the community to join our work projects, including Natural Resources Inventory and ash tree inventory, The Andrew Weeks Memorial Forest trail maintenance, and an Invasives Patrol.

Major projects for 2018 included maintenance for the Weeks Memorial Forest Carriage Trail; continuing work on our Natural Resources Inventory; participating in the Green River Watershed Alliance; supporting adoption of a Flood and Fluvial Erosion Hazard ordinance; working with the town road crew on a management plan for controlling roadside invasive plants. We regularly meet with other community groups such as the Planning Commission and Recreation Committee, and plan to include the Energy Committee in 2019. We also support projects by Guilford Central School's 6th grade as part of their place-based education programs.

Our work on the Weeks Forest Carriage trail included brush clearing and invasive plant removal, with a focus on garlic mustard this year. We hope to extend the trail with support from the Recreation Committee, and we partnered with them to host a Spooky Walk in the forest as part of a town-wide Halloween observance.

We continued work on the Natural Resource Inventory (NRI), identified in our Town Plan as crucial for establishing a baseline for planning how to manage and preserve Guilford's valuable natural resources, especially our productive forests and woodlands. We engaged naturalist Patti Smith of the Bonneyvale Environmental Education Center to lead this 3-year project. In 2018 we assisted her to identify areas of high interest and value, and contacted landowners to seek permission to conduct field studies. Work on the NRI is partially funded by the Green River Watershed Alliance.

We co-sponsored or supported several events as part of the Green River Watershed Alliance, which brings together the towns of Marlboro, Halifax, and Guilford, as well as cultural and conservation groups, to increase public awareness of the value of our Green River Watershed as a natural and cultural resource. These included a Conservation Easement workshop for landowners in March; Resilient Roads Forum in May; hosting a stream table booth at the Guilford Fair, and a "Dark and Stormy Night" forum in September. The last 3 events were designed to increase awareness of the need for thoughtful flood resilience planning in the face of increasing extreme weather events.

Guilford Conservation Commission members attended several joint regional conservation commission meetings in 2018, to increase our collaborative efforts with nearby commissions. Our members are active in and report back on the work of other area conservation groups: Windham Regional Commission, Windham Regional Woodlands Association, Green River Watershed Alliance steering committee, Guilford Preservation, Inc, Southeast Vermont Wildlife Linkage Group.

We communicate with Guilford community members via Front Porch Forum, the Guilford Gazette, and Town Meeting displays of maps and information. We are establishing a Conservation Commission page on the town website to house information relevant to our mission of educating the public about our natural resources

New in 2019 will be the early stages of preparing for Emerald Ash Borer, an insect that destroys ash trees. We will start to inventory trees along roadsides and on town property and plan for the eventual removal of those in hazard areas. We hope to combine this work with monthly field walks.

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 walks, activities or join a working committee, contact chair Linda Hecker at lrhecker47@gmail.com

Submitted by Linda Hecker, GCC chair

