

GUILFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2021  
for Town Report 2022

The Guilford Conservation Commission (GCC) continued to fulfill our mission, undaunted by the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, as we met outdoors or remotely over zoom to carry out activities. 2021 was the Year of the Tree for us. Our Conservation Commission received Tree Steward of the Year designation from the Vermont Division of Urban & Community Forests. The award plaque is on display in the Town Office. We again participated in Vermont's Emerald Ash Borer Awareness Week by hanging posters on trees, with a special kit awarded by the University of Vermont. We arranged for several significant ash trees to be inoculated against Emerald Ash Borer, and we worked with the Road Crew to continue the process of identifying and removing potentially hazardous ash trees in the public right-of-way.

Most notably, we applied for and received an Arbor Day grant from Vt Urban & Community Forests. We planted 3 beautiful shade trees in the barren field next to the Town Office, started a 3-year maintenance plan for those trees, and purchased tree-focused curricula for students at Guilford Central School, who enhanced the adjacent field by planting many lovely shrubs and bushes.

We continued to support the field work of naturalist Patti Smith, who is completing on-the-ground surveys of Guilford's important natural species and communities for our Natural Resource Inventory. This will give us a baseline accounting of Guilford's current natural resources, so we can plan for future conservation of our most treasured assets. We expect the field work to wrap up this year, and we have allocated funds for preparing the final report in a form that will be accessible and highly usable for different purposes, including conservation planning, house siting, and flood hazard mitigation. The Inventory is an important resource for updating our Town Plan.

We co-sponsored Community Values Mapping activities with the Planning Commission, under guidance of conservation experts from Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife. This gave citizens the chance to identify the areas in town we all cherish, an important part of the Town Planning cycle. People participated live online, via a website, or by physically marking maps on a kiosk in the Natural Playscape

We helped the Planning Commission complete the Town Plan, which was put on hold during the pandemic. We wrote the Land Use section and revised the Natural Resource section to include new requirements mandated by Act 171 for identifying and protecting forest blocks and habitat connectors while supporting the local forest products industry.

We continue to deal with invasive plants. We help the Road Crew monitor and remove potentially hazardous invasive roadside plants such as cow parsnip. We regularly

schedule work session in the Weeks Forest to control the numerous invasive plants such as bittersweet, multiflora rose, glossy buckthorn.

Other important work of GCC included maintenance of the Carriage Trail in the Andrew Weeks Forest. We know that the trail is visited frequently and much appreciated for its natural and historic values. Thanks to a team of volunteers, we replaced an eroding culvert with a wooden plank bridge over a wet spot.

Our commission members actively participate in regionwide conservation activities with the Green River Watershed Alliance, Windham Connectivity Collaborative, Vermont Woodlands Association, Women Owning Woodlots, Windham Regional Commission, and joint regional meetings of conservation-focused groups, all of which continued working during the pandemic. We were asked by Windham Regional Commission to mentor the newly-formed Vernon Conservation Commission, which we did by inviting members to our meetings and sharing resources.

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

Current members of the Guilford Conservation Commission are Linda Hecker, Susan Bonthron, Bill Jewell, Linda Lembke, Steve Soszynski, Karen Murphy, Bevan Quinn, Marli Rabinowitz, Anne Montgomery, with Michael Becker representing the Select Board and David Eastman and Richard Austin contributing as highly valued volunteers.

The Conservation Commission holds regular meetings at 5:30pm on the third Thursday of each month in the Town Office or virtually via Zoom, including phone access. If you'd like to participate in our walks, activities or join a working committee, contact chair Linda Hecker at [lrhecker47@gmail.com](mailto:lrhecker47@gmail.com)

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."