

## NORWELL CONSERVATION COMMISSION – 2017 - ANNUAL REPORT

The Conservation Commission is responsible for the protection and management of Norwell's Conservation land, for the regulatory administration of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the Norwell Wetland Bylaw.

**The Conservation Commission serves these primary purposes:**

1. To administer and enforce the state Wetland Protection Act and the Norwell Wetland Bylaw.  
*Protect the water you drink, and the natural resources around you for you and the future!*

2. To protect and manage:

2000+	Acres	Total Land Under Conservation Care	<a href="#">Jacobs Woods-1950</a> <a href="#">Stetson Meadows -1971</a>	<a href="#">Donovan Farm / Wildcat - 1997 -</a>
15		Boardwalks, Bridges, Docks and View Decks	<a href="#">Fogg Forest – 1972</a> <a href="#">Valley Swamp – 1973</a>	Betzold and Asinippi parcels - 1999/2001
21+	Miles	<a href="#">Public Trails</a>	Hatch Wood Lots – 1977	<a href="#">Cuffee Lane - 2012</a>
10	Fields	<a href="#">Active Farming</a>	<a href="#">Cuffee Hill - 1982</a>	<a href="#">Simon Hill- 2013</a>
11	Conservation Restrictions	Monitored	<a href="#">Miller Woods - 1983</a>	Masthead – 2013
9831	Feet	Scenic Stone Walls	Jacobs Farm - 1989	Bennett 2015

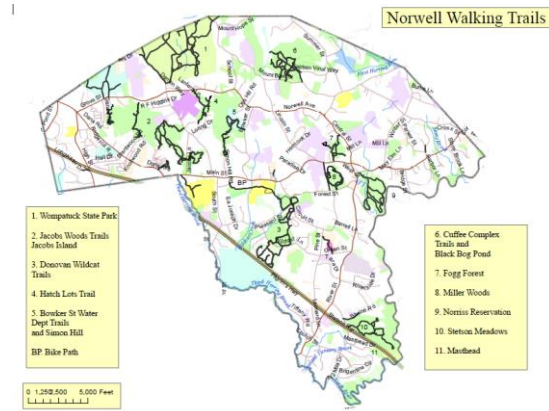
3. To conduct outreach and education regarding the town's natural resources and environmental issues.

**2018 Goals and Challenges -**

1. *Increase utilization of Norwell's Town properties for its residents.*

The residents of Norwell have continued to invest in open space to preserve the beauty and environmental quality of the town. This dedication by the voters comes with a responsibility to protect essential ecological communities while also allowing responsible recreational access to these lands by the taxpayers who have purchased them. The Commission along with volunteers and staff pledges to work cooperatively with all Town departments to provide safe community access to green space. This will balance with the protection of the environment as identified in Goal 1 of the Norwell Open Space Plan #'s 2, 10, 13 and 14. To view the 2012-2019 Norwell Open Space Plan, please see the attached link.

<http://www.townofnorwell.net/sites/norwellma/files/uploads/norwellopenspacerecreationplan2012-2019.pdf>



Clean water, clean air, and a healthy environment are values we are all charged with protecting and preserving. Residents are provided the opportunity to hike, bike, camp, fish, and enjoy the natural areas they have protected, all minutes from home. Preserving open space also protects watersheds,

improves the water quality of rivers, lakes, and streams, protects drinking water and air quality, helps control flooding and preserves critical wildlife habitat.

At the Annual Town Meeting in May 2018, the Town of Norwell will be asked to vote on adding the 124-acre Whiting Fields property to the town's resources. This request is consistent with the call for protection of "Natural Resources, Open Space and Cultural Resources" as identified in Chapter 4 of the Town Master Plan. This acquisition is also consistent with the Town Open Space and Recreation Plan 2012-2019 (OS&R Plan, goal 3, #46, 5574, 76, 77 and goal 5#103). As noted in OS&R Plan goal 5#103, the Town residents particularly called out the Whiting Fields for acquisition and protection by the Town. Please support this important initiative.

[https://www.townofnorwell.net/sites/norwellma/files/uploads/master\\_plan.pdf](https://www.townofnorwell.net/sites/norwellma/files/uploads/master_plan.pdf)

<https://www.townofnorwell.net/sites/norwellma/files/uploads/norwellopenspacerecreationplan2012-2019.pdf>

“Here is your country. Cherish these natural wonders, cherish the natural resources, cherish the history and romance as a sacred heritage, for your children and your children's children. Do not let selfish men or greedy interests skin your country of its beauty, its riches or its romance.”

— **Theodore Roosevelt**

The environment is where we all meet; where all have a mutual interest;  
it is the one thing all of us share.

– **Lady Bird Johnson**

2. *Open Space and Recreation Plan*— The Commission will work this year to update the 2012-2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan. The update is due for 2019 and will be valid for an additional 5 years. If you have an interest in participating, please contact the Conservation Office.
3. *Streamline trail maintenance and improve access to our conserved lands.* Maintenance and repairs on the Town's many miles of conservation trails continue. We strive to include all neighborhoods within each open space trail system. Over the past three years, the Commission, staff, and volunteers have worked diligently to improve trail conditions so that families, walkers, bikers, and skiers can have access to the many Conservation-managed lands in town. We plan to continue enhancing and maintaining the parking areas, trail width, boardwalks and bridges within each park, while still maintaining the small path charm of the overall trail systems. OS&R Plan, Goal 1, #'s 17, 19-22, Goal 3 #53, 54.  
[https://www.townofnorwell.net/sites/norwellma/files/uploads/norwell\\_conservation\\_trail\\_map\\_2017.pdf](https://www.townofnorwell.net/sites/norwellma/files/uploads/norwell_conservation_trail_map_2017.pdf)
4. *Continue coordination with Norwell Highway and Tree and Grounds.* The Commission appreciates the time and effort that the Norwell Highway and Tree and Grounds crews have made to Jacobs Dam, Jacobs Parking Area, Donovan Parking Area and to many other scenic conservation areas throughout town. The parking areas are designed to be picnic destinations as well as access to the many trail networks. We look forward to continuing this effort.
5. *Apply for more grants.*  
There are significant quantities of grant money available to communities. The Commission and staff work to maximize efficiency and achievements by continuing to seek creative project funding and support services through multiple sources. 2018 will continue with a grant writing committee utilizing the knowledge, resources and skills of staff, and volunteers. The Commission is actively involved in land acquisition with regional partners that could utilize these grants.

6. *Open Space Land Improvements*

Working with DCR and the Pathways Committee to create a parking and trailhead access to the 500 acres of Wompatuck trails in Norwell via the newly acquired Bennett parcel on Grove Street. Open Space and Recreation Plan Goal 3 #43-45 and 4 #76.

7. *Continue the Adopt-A-Trail Program.* Please help us keep the trails maintained and open for all residents to enjoy by volunteering to help monitor and report on trail conditions. You may already be walking trails and can participate simply by downloading the link and form. Your feedback is essential to allowing our amazing trail team to streamline the program, making sure we target problems and issues as quickly as possible. If you are interested, please contact the Commission office and sign-up today!

<https://www.townofnorwell.net/pathway-and-woodland-adopt-trail-program>

8. *Improve the permitting process by improving communications and collaboration with other departments.* The Commission staff has increased coordination with other regulatory departments and is in the process of developing housekeeping articles to create consistent regulatory requirements with other Town Boards and Committees

9. *Implement community outreach and education programs.* The Commission will continue to develop the education and outreach goals identified in the Norwell Open Space Plan (community and recreation needs sections). We will work to expand our outreach and education programs to include seasonal, outdoor, family-oriented nature programs (at Jacobs, Fogg and Stetson trail areas). Our goal is to facilitate family-friendly outings to the many Conservation-managed, passive recreational areas in Norwell. OSR Goal 3#42.

10. *The Commission continues to support the environmental education programs* at all the Norwell Schools. We promote conservation related School programs.

11. *Continue hunting and promoting year-round multi-purpose use of Norwell's Open Spaces.* The Commission manages over 1200 acres of land available to hunters during State authorized seasons. The Commission does not require any permits or impose regulations beyond State Hunting requirements. A map is available in the Conservation and Town Clerk Offices showing where these areas are. The Commission appreciates the willingness of all users of Norwell's public lands, to help preserve the rights of families with children and dogs to feel safe while enjoying the active conservation trails as well as hunters during hunting season. We appreciate the efforts of those hunters who take advantage of the significant acreage dedicated to hunters, away from the trails. The Commission is committed to preserving and encouraging year-round outdoor recreation for all residents in a safe and mutually respectful manner.

### **Regulatory Responsibilities**

The major task of the Commission is to regulate conditions for any work falling within rivers, streams, wetlands, or buffers to these areas. Anyone seeking to work within 100 feet of a wetland, vernal pool or pond (the buffer zone), within 200 feet of a river or stream (the Riverfront Resource Area), or in any area that may cause additional runoff into a wetland, river, or stream must obtain prior approval of the Commission. The Commission has varying levels of permitting to accomplish this.

- The Notice of Intent is for larger projects that occur close to or near wetland resources or have a high probability of having a direct or long-term impact on those resources. – Orders of Conditions are issued that either permit with conditions, or deny the project (ex: dam removal, new home construction, subdivisions, work within the highly sensitive 50-foot buffer). The Commission reviewed **48** new applications in 2017 and issued **25** Orders of Conditions for Notices of Intent and Resource Delineations.

- The Commission monitors and works to ensure site stormwater and soils are controlled on **5** major subdivision projects. In 2017 we completed **4** Orders of Resource Area Delineations. We are currently involved with **2** new subdivision filings on Cross/Winter St. & Circuit St.
- A Request for Determination is used for smaller projects, projects in the outer buffer zone, or projects with minimal likelihood of adversely impacting wetland resource areas. A Determination of Applicability is issued either allowing the project or requiring a filing of a Notice of Intent if the project is more involved. (ex: Simple septic repair). The Commission reviewed and issued **23** Determinations in 2017.
- An Administrative Letter Permit is used for projects within the buffer, which are either so minor that there is no chance of adverse impact or for which the physical layout of the project makes it nearly impossible to have an adverse impact on resources. No public hearing or filing fee are required for this permit level (ex: Projects with all construction activities 100 feet or more from the closest resource). The Conservation office issued **28** letter permits in 2017.
- Interdepartmental Sign-offs for projects close to or just touching the buffer zone or for which there is no chance of adverse impact to wetland resources (ex: decks on the opposite side of the home from wetlands and more than 100 feet from the wetland, or hazardous tree removal in buffer areas). The Commission office issued **144** sign-offs in 2017.
- Certificates of Compliance are issued when a project is shown to be completed in a manner that protects nearby resource areas and is consistent with the permit issued. The Commission office issued **12** Certificates of Compliance for completion of projects.

#### **Conservation Commission Members and Staff**

The Conservation Commission is comprised of seven residents who serve three-year terms and are appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Marynel Wahl, David Osborne, Bob McMackin, Robert Woodill, Justin Ivas, Ron Mott and Stacy Minihane. Marynel Wahl continues as the Commission's Chairperson and Bob Woodill as the Vice-Chairperson.

The Commission welcomes new Town Planner Ken Kirkland! He brings a new energy and perspective to the two Departments that share office space. The Commission looks forward to collaborating in the future!

The Commission very much appreciates the dedication of Administrative Assistants Meredith Schmid and Nicole Pelletier who make certain that both Conservation and Planning run smoothly and efficiently. They are both always there to greet, assist residents, contractors and call-ins and make sure everyone finds the information they are looking for with a smile!

Thank you to recording clerk Chris Sullivan for his continued support.

#### **2017 Accomplishments and Projects**

Major projects from 2017 include:

Farming - The Commission continues to manage and sponsors active farming on the six Jacobs Farm Fields, the 2 Donovan Farm Fields, Barstow Field and the Main Street Field. We gratefully acknowledge the dedication of the farmers in helping preserve this cultural heritage, Hornstra Dairy Farm, and Norwell Farms Community as well as Beekeeper Luke Lambert.

Regulatory Projects – The Commission is working on an update of the Towns Wetland Bylaw Regulations with the intent of clarifying resource areas, performance standards and the public understanding of the regulations and how they affect properties near and in wetlands.

Trail Management - The Commission continues to maintain and manage many miles of trails within Norwell. The Commission has a highly efficient cost effective trail maintenance program thanks to our Senior Trail Crew and Volunteer Programs.

Organized Trail Walks are held jointly with the Recreation Department each spring and fall and have been a successful way of introducing residents and guests to the many miles of conservation trails available in Norwell. These walks will be scheduled monthly this year, with additional walks available to the public in collaboration with the Town of Norwell Library, the South Shore Natural Science Center and the Association of Massachusetts Wetland Scientists. Stay tuned! Contact the Conservation Office for additional information.

The Commission thanks, George Grey, Judy Volpe and the Norwell Trail Walkers Club for their dedication to promoting the active enjoyment of the Town's trail system and open spaces.  
<https://www.townofnorwell.net/recreation-department>

The Senior Trails Crew worked throughout the year clearing debris from trails, repairing boardwalks, removing down trees, maintaining parking areas, helping lead trail walks, and welcoming visitors to the town trails. All these essential tasks are instrumental in keeping the town's open space lands accessible and open to the public. The Conservation Commission gratefully acknowledges the work of our Senior Trail Crew – Al Svelnis, Dave Hill, Edward Cox, Paul Legere, Ernest Butler, Steve Young with assistance from Tree and Grounds staff. Their dedication to the Conservation Lands and Trails in Norwell is much appreciated.

Installation of Bridges, Boardwalks, and Benches and Parking Improvements - The Commission started a program to replace and repair many boardwalks throughout the town trail system. The Commission focused on Parking Lot improvements and access in 2016. We will continue repairing and replacing parking areas, boardwalks, and bridges throughout 2018.

Trail Information Kiosks - Trail maps and information signage have been finalized and installed on the kiosks and trail boards. The Commission is working on parking area signs and midtrail signboards to guide walkers.

Second Climate Change Symposium with regional partners is developing. Coastal Zone Management is the lead on this project. We anticipate that it will be held in the fall of 2018. The effects and impacts of climate change are widespread and will continue to influence rainfall levels, stormwater impacts, and wetland resources. This program is expected to continue and Norwell Conservation looks forward to continuing as a sponsoring member.

Check before you – (Conservation Safe)

To better understand the resources on or near your property, please feel free to contact the Conservation Agent, Nancy Hemingway (or any of the fabulous staff!). She offers personalized assistance with permitting issues, environmental concerns, or just creating a unique GIS map for your property. Assistance is also available regarding information on public lands or trails. Any contemplation of work in or within 100 feet of a wetland, or within 200 feet of a stream, is encouraged to contact the office for information about the Wetlands Protection Act and local wetland bylaw at the Commission's office in the Town Hall during regular business hours.

<https://www.townofnorwell.net/user/261/contact>

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A reminder that we are always looking for volunteers. Please stop by the Conservation Office or call (781-659-8022) if you can help.

Please be safe and ask the Conservation Office if you have any questions or just want information regarding your property, nearby resources or Conservation Lands. We are happy to answer any questions.

2017 Conservation Commission Members - Appointed by the Board of Selectmen

Marynel Wahl – Chair, 2011

Robert Woodill – Vice Chair, 2011

Bob McMackin, 2016

David Osborne, 2005

Justin Ivas, 2016

Ron Mott, 2013

Stacy Minihane, 2016

Respectfully submitted by Nancy Hemingway – Conservation Agent

The Norwell Conservation Department, Meredith Schmid, Administrative Assistant

And Marynel Wahl, Commission Chair