

NORWELL CONSERVATION COMMISSION – 2020 - 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 Commission protects and manages:

- 2100+ acres of land, including 10 actively farmed fields
- 22+ miles of public trails including 15 boardwalks, bridges, docks, and view decks
- 12 monitored conservation restrictions
- 9831 feet of scenic stone walls

Conservation Lands

Jacobs Woods-1950	Stetson Meadows -1971	Fogg Forest - 1972	Valley Swamp - 1973
Hatch Wood Lots - 1977	Cuffee Hill - 1982	Miller Woods - 1983	Jacobs Farm - 1989
Donovan Farm / Wildcat - 1997	Betzold and Asinippi parcels -1999/2001	Cuffee Lane - 2012	Simon Hill - 2013
Masthead - 2013	Bennett - 2015	Carleton Property - 2020	

2020 Accomplishments and Projects

Open Space and Recreation Plan - The Open Space and Recreation Committee (a Sub-Committee of the Conservation Commission) created the 2021 Norwell Open Space and Recreation Plan with the help of The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). To view the 2021 Norwell Open Space Plan, please see the attached link. <https://www.townofnorwell.net/open-space-and-recreation-plan/pages/norwell-open-space-and-recreation-plan-2021>

1

Carlton Property - The Commission purchased and now has under its protection the 124-acre Carlton Property, located at the intersection of Main Street and Lincoln Street. This property includes two actively farmed fields and several preexisting trails. The Commission is ecstatic to be able to keep this land as open space, and plans to work towards creating trails and connections to existing conservation lands in the future.

Wompatuck State Park - The Commission and the Pathways Committee worked together to design and fund an ADA and AAB compliant parking lot and trail to access the Wompatuck trail system, via the Bennett parcel on Grove Street. This project is currently out for bid.

Emergency Action Plan for Jacobs Pond Dam - The Commission worked with the Town and the Pare Corporation to create an Emergency Action Plan for the Jacobs Pond Dam. It is being finalized this year.

Farming - The Commission continues to manage and sponsor active farming on the six Jacobs Farm Fields, the two Donovan Farm Fields, Barstow Field, Main Street Field, and the Carleton property. We gratefully acknowledge the dedication of Hornstra Dairy Farm, Cross Street Flower Farm, Beekeeper Luke Lambert, and John Haskins in helping preserve this cultural heritage.

Regulatory Projects - The Commission, with the help of several Town & local representatives, worked to create a Town Stormwater Bylaw that was approved by Town Meeting in 2020. This year, the Conservation Commission plans to adopt & implement the applicable Stormwater Rules & Regulations into its bylaws.

Trail Management - The Commission continues to maintain and manage many miles of trails in Norwell by clearing trail debris, repairing boardwalks, removing down trees, and maintaining parking areas. The Conservation Commission gratefully acknowledges the work of our Senior Trail Crew – Steve McViney,

Paul Legere, Fred Zarack, Richard Karacius, and Dave Hill, with assistance from Tree and Grounds staff. Their dedication to the Conservation Lands and Trails in Norwell is much appreciated.

Trail Information Kiosks - The Commission had parking area signs printed and installation started. Mid-trail signboards to guide walkers are still pending.

Check before you work– (Conservation Safe)

To better understand the resources on or near your property, please feel free to contact the Conservation Department. Norwell offers assistance with permitting issues, environmental concerns, creating a unique GIS map for your property, and information on public lands or trails. 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. wsaunders@townofnorwell.net or mschmid@townofnorwell.net.

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

2021 Goals and Challenges

1. Continue our work during COVID-19 - With the pandemic changing how everyone operates, the Commission has adjusted our usual functions to better meet the needs of the town during these challenging times. With remote meetings, electronic filings, and other precautionary procedures, the Commission continues to work with the community to protect our land in the safest way possible.
2. Open Space Land Improvements - The Commission continues to promote year-round multi-purpose use of Norwell's Open Spaces. We encourage residents to use the Adopt-A-Trail Program to help us keep the trails maintained and open for all residents to enjoy by volunteering to help monitor and report on trail conditions (<https://www.townofnorwell.net/pathway-and-woodland-adopt-trail-program>). The Commission also continues to coordinate with and appreciates the time and effort of the Norwell Highway and Tree and Grounds crews with helping us maintain our lands.
3. Apply for more grants - The Commission and staff work to maximize efficiency and achievements by continuing to seek creative project funding and support services through multiple sources. The Commission would welcome a team of volunteer residents to help monitor, identify, and draft grant applications.
4. Improve the permitting process by improving communications and collaboration with other departments – We continue the focus on coordinating (inter-departmental) reviews, when possible, in order to reduce the burden on the applicant, while still keeping the final projects consistent with all departments, individual boards and commissions.
5. Implement community outreach and education programs - In 2021, we plan to collaborate with Regional non-profit educators such as North South Rivers Watershed Association, the South Shore Natural Science Center, the Norwell Public Library, and the Norwell Public Schools (among others) in expanding our outreach and education programs to include additional seasonal, outdoor, family-oriented nature programs.

Regulatory Responsibilities

Submittal of several major regulatory projects occurred during 2020 including those on Cordwainer Drive, Stetson Road, and Circuit Street. We have review of these currently underway with peer review expertise being brought in as needed to ensure protection of downgradient public interests. The development push to

place larger projects into smaller less suitable areas increases yearly.

In 2020 the Commission also reviewed and issued:

- 15 Notice of Intent applications and issued 18 Orders of Conditions
- 1 Resource Area Delineation
- 17 Determinations
- 12 letter permits
- 3 sign-offs
- 15 Certificates of Compliance for completion of projects

Conservation Commission Members and Staff

Norwell suffered a major loss last September with the passing of Nancy Hemingway, the Town's longstanding Conservation Agent, as she valiantly fought and finally succumbed to a long and difficult battle with cancer. Nancy was known and admired by many as an extremely passionate, talented, and dedicated Agent in the last nine years, who served and guided many Conservation committees, both within Norwell and on the South Shore. She collaborated closely with homeowners, engineers, and contractors to ensure that their projects and developments maintained and preserved Norwell's vital land and wetland resources. Her work was informed by her deep love of the outdoors, in creating and sustaining a connection to the many beautiful pathways and natural vistas that Norwell has to offer. She will be missed dearly by all that worked with her, in Norwell and throughout the South Shore.

In January 2021, the Conservation Commission welcomed new Agent Will Saunders. Will has a Master of Science in Forest Resources Management from the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry and a Bachelor of Science in Ecology and Environmental Science from the University of Maine. Most recently, he has worked in the state of New York as an Ecological Restorative Project Manager. The Commission looks forward to working with Will and are enthusiastic about the energy and Conservation knowledge he will bring to his position.

3

The Conservation Commission is comprised of seven residents who serve three-year terms and are appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Ellen Markham resigned from the Commission in December 2020. We would like to wish Ellen luck and thank her for her service to the Commission, as well as several boards and sub-committees.

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

The Commissioners spend significant amounts of volunteer time to ensure that the natural resources and conservation areas in Norwell are protected and cared for. Marynel Wahl continues as the Commission's Chairperson and Bob Woodill as the Vice-Chairperson.

2020 Conservation Commission Members - Appointed by the Board of Selectmen

Marynel Wahl – Chair (through 2022)

Robert Woodill – Vice Chair (through 2023)

Ron Mott (through 2021)

Bob McMackin (through 2021)

Justin Ivas (through 2023)

Ellen Markham (resigned Dec. 2020)

Roy Bjorlin (through 2021)

Respectfully submitted by Will Saunders – Conservation Agent, The Norwell Conservation Department,
Meredith Schmid, Administrative Assistant and Marynel Wahl, Commission Chair