

NORWELL CONSERVATION COMMISSION - 2022 - ANNUAL REPORT

The Conservation Commission is responsible for the stewardship of Norwell's Conservation land, through the acquisition of land, required maintenance and improvements to the properties, protection, conservation of the land's natural resources, and implementation of passive recreation. The Commission is also responsible for the regulatory administration and enforcement of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, the Norwell Wetland Bylaw, and the Norwell Stormwater Bylaw.

The Commission protects and manages:

- 2000+ acres of land, including 15 actively farmed fields.
- 22+ miles of public trails, including boardwalks, bridges, docks, and view decks.
- 12 monitored conservation restrictions.
- 9831 feet of scenic stone walls.

Conservation Lands - Years

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 Property - 1997	Betzold Parcel (Jacobs) - 1999	Assinippi Parcel (Jacobs) - 2001	Cuffee Lane - 2012
Simon Hill/Bowker - 2013	Masthead - 2013	Bennett Property (Wompatuck) - 2015	Carleton Property - 2020
Tanczos Property (Donovan/Wildcat) - 2021	Raimondi Properties (Circuit and Pine St) - 2021		

2022 Accomplishments and Projects

Donovan Wildcat Parking Expansion - Since Covid, there has been an increase in the usage of Conservation trails around town. One of the heaviest used areas has been the Pathway at the Donovan Wildcat Property. The parking lot was not originally designed for a large number of cars. Working with Norwell Highway, and Tree and Grounds Departments, with funding from CPC, the parking lot was expanded and improved to accommodate more vehicles. The Commission is hoping to finish the lot this year by paving it to minimize the maintenance of the lot due to its heavy usage.

Dog Waste Stations - The Commission received funding at Town Meeting in 2022 for a Dog Waste Station pilot program. Dog waste left on the trails has always been an issue, which has only gotten worse. The Commission hired Doody Calls to install 6 waste stations around town (along the Pathway at Miller Woods, Donovan Parking Lot, Pathway entrance on Cushing Hill, Jacobs Pond, Wompatuck Entrance, and along the Main St Sidewalk at Town Hall), and to service them for the year. The idea is to see if these stations help improve the issue enough to justify full time funding. So far there has been a massive improvement in the amount of dog waste left on the trails in the areas where the stations have been installed. The Commission will work to secure full funding, and potentially expand the station locations this year.

Conservation Land Inventory - The Commission is responsible for the stewardship of over 2,000 acres of protected land in town. Multiple Conservation Agents have worked to create an inventory of all the land that has been put into the care and custody of the Commission over the decades. The Conservation Agent and an intern worked this year going through all the deeds to create an inventory of all the land that should be in the care and custody of the Conservation Commission. The Commission will continue to work this year with Town Counsel, the Assessor, and Select Board to make sure all land in the inventory is properly protected.

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

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. Last year, the Pond Trail (J3) at Jacobs was continued all the way down to Main St, and the Assinippi Trail was opened on the west side of Jacobs Pond off of Doris Ave. The Conservation Commission gratefully acknowledges the work of the Tree and Grounds staff and our Senior Trail Crew - Ron Mott, Steve McViney, Fred Zarack, Richard Karacius, and Bill Lavery. Their dedication to the Conservation Lands and trails in Norwell is much appreciated.

2023 Goals and Challenges

1. Improvements and Connections at Carleton and the Whiting Fields - The Commission has been and will continue to work to improve and create access to the Carleton Property. In 2021, the Commission received a grant from Mass Trails, and funding from CPC in 2022, for the creation of new trails and parking at Carleton and the connecting properties. An ADA parking lot will be created on Trout Brook Lane at The Gould Property. New trails and wetland crossings will be created from this parking area. The first trail will connect the parking area to Hemlock Drive, and the second trail will connect from that trail to the existing trails at Carleton. The Carleton trails will be improved where needed, and a new trail and wetland crossing will be created to connect the existing trails to the Main St Sidewalk through the historic Whiting Fields cow path. Funding will be secured for the third part of the project, which will be to cross Main St and connect the Carleton and Fogg Forest trails with the Miller Woods trails and the Pathway, with ADA improvements to the Miller Wood's Parking Lot. Additionally, the Commission is working with CPC funds to reclaim the cow path and stone walls at the historic Whiting Fields, and has applied for additional funding to rehabilitate the fields themselves. Once completed, the Commission will begin the process of finding a long term farmer for the fields. The Commission will be working with Norwell Highway, and Tree and Grounds Departments, volunteers, local farmers John Hornstra and John Haskins, Bobby McEachern, and other groups to complete this work.
2. Jacobs Pond Dam - The Commission updated the Emergency Action Plan for the dam in 2020 and had a state inspection done in 2021. The Commission is working closely with Norwell Highway Department and The North-South River Watershed Association to pay for, and fund studies and engineered design plans for repairs to the dam, and installation of a fish ladder. Surveys, plans, and grant applications for state funding will be completed in early 2023. The work will keep the dam in compliance with the state requirements, and the addition of the fish ladder will allow Brook Trout and other native fish access to Jacobs Pond for the first time in centuries.
3. New Trail Maps - The Commission plans to print and make available to the public, new trail maps in the spring of 2023. The Agent GSP all trails in town in 2022 to make sure all existing trails were accurate for the maps. The maps will include all new trails since the last printing (2015), new planned trails, The Carleton Property, and the Norwell Homes Trails.
4. Open Space Land Improvements - The Commission promotes year-round multi-purpose use of Norwell's Open Spaces. The Commission will be using funding from CPC and the Conservation Fund to improve trails and create new wetland crossing along existing trails on all Conservation properties. 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/conservation-commission/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 in helping us maintain our lands.

5. *Hazardous and Damaged Trees on Conservation Lands* - The Commission always works closely with Norwell Highway, and Trees and Grounds Departments to remove and take care of hazardous trees on Conservation Lands. After Significant storms in 2018 and 2021, we continue to find and remove these hazards as we try to keep up with the increase in severe weather. If you notice a dangerous tree on Conservation Land, please call Conservation or Tree and Grounds immediately.
6. *Dedication of Memorial Garden to Nancy Hemingway* - The Commission plans to dedicate a Memorial Garden in the name of our late Conservation Agent Nancy Hemingway later this year. The Commission has been working to turn the smaller Donovan Field into a native wildflower field in her honor and design a Breast Cancer Memorial Garden along the path. Donations are being accepted for this project by the Friends of Norwell Community Gardens.
7. *Apply for More Grants* - The Commission and staff work to maximize efficiency and achievements by seeking creative project funding and support services through multiple sources. The Commission will specifically be applying for another Mass Trails grant this year for the Carleton trail system and working with the Norwell Highway Department for state grants for repairs to the Jacobs Pond Dam. The Commission would welcome a team of volunteer residents to help monitor, identify, and draft grant applications.
8. *Improve the Permitting Process by Improving Communications and Collaboration with Other Departments*. We continue the focus on coordinating (inter-departmental) reviews, when possible, to reduce the burden on the applicant while still keeping the final projects consistent with all departments, individual boards, and commissions.
9. *Implement Community Outreach and Education Programs* - In 2023, 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.

Conservation Responsibilities

As one of the many required responsibilities of the Commission, we continue to improve and maintain the many Conservation properties, oversee the agricultural use of the historic farm fields, protect the Town's open space and natural resources, and promote passive recreation. The Conservation Agent and the Commission, as a team, diligently oversee your town resources.

Conservation land and other open spaces enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors in various ways. These included, the protection of flood control capabilities of wetlands, preservation water quality in streams and ponds, protection wildlife and plant habitat, forestalls problems of overly dense land development, and helps to preserve the Town's historic character. Natural open space also provides opportunities for recreational and educational experiences. However, open space protection does not end at simply safeguarding the property from development. Protection is a continuing need involving maintenance, monitoring, and care. Last year the Commission created new wetland crossings in Miller Woods and Stetson Meadows through Norwell Cares, cleared and maintained all trails along with the completion of the Pond Trail (J3) and opened up the Assinippi trail at Jacobs Pond, installed six dog waste stations around town, started an environmentally friendly invasive plant removal project using beetles at Jacobs Pond, expanded Donovan Wildcat Parking Lot, conducted an emergency breach of a beaver dam at Jacobs Pond, worked with

the Eagle Scouts on projects throughout Town, GPS all trails in town in preparation for new trail maps, and continued working with hunters and residents to educate all on the allowable uses of the Conservation properties.

To better understand the resources on or near your property, do not hesitate to contact the Conservation Department. Norwell offers assistance with permitting, environmental concerns, creating a unique GIS map for your property, and information on public lands an/or trails. Please be safe and ask the Conservation Office if you have any questions or 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.

The Commission thanks all residents for their support of Open Space.

Regulatory Responsibilities

Submittal of several major regulatory projects occurred during 2022, including the first Stormwater Permits, and the White Barn Village project. We review projects as they come in with peer review expertise to protect downgradient and related habitat, wetland resources, riverfront, and other public interests. In addition, the development push to place larger projects into smaller, less suitable areas increases yearly.

In 2022 the Commission also reviewed and issued:

- **31** Orders of Conditions
- **12** Minor/Major Amendments
- **1** Resource Area Delineation
- **20** Determinations of Application
- **23** Administrative Letter Permits
- **10** Stormwater Administrative Land Disturbance Reviews
- **2** Stormwater Land Disturbance Permits
- **30** Certificates of Compliance for completion of projects
- **2** Enforcement Orders

Conservation Commission Members and Staff

The Conservation Department staff includes the Conservation Agent Will Saunders and the Conservation Administrative Assistant Meredith Schmid. Will has acclimated to the job nicely after a challenging first two years in the aftermath of Covid. Will continues to work on improving trail access around town for residents and making sure that the Conservation lands are available for all to enjoy. Will works closely with all town departments and promotes departments' collaboration and finds the best way to balance the protection of Norwell's resources efficiently and effectively for the town residents' projects. Meredith Schmid continues to assist town resident with their questions and inquiries about permitting and Conservation. Meredith will begin her 20th year here at town hall later this year, most of it with the Conservation Department. The Commission cannot thank Meredith enough for her dedication and hard work.

The Conservation Commission is comprised of seven residents who serve three-year terms and are appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Roy Bjorlin stepped down this year after four year of being on the Commission. Roy will continue to assist the Commission as a volunteer. Douglas Luoma joined the Commission in May of 2022, filling Roy's vacancy. Doug has spent years as part of the Friends of Wompatuck and brings plenty of

knowledge of trails and resource protection to the Commission. We look forward to his work and input as part of the Commission.

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 well cared for. Marynel Wahl continues as the Commission's Chairperson and Bob Woodill as the Vice-Chairperson.

2022 Conservation Commission Members - Appointed by the Select Board

Marynel Wahl - Chair	(through 2025)
Robert Woodill -Vice-Chair	(through 2023)
Ron Mott	(through 2024)
Bob McMackin	(through 2024)
Justin Ivas	(through 2023)
Patricia DeGiulio	(through 2025)
Douglas Luoma	(through 2024)

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