



# New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions

SERVING NEW HAMPSHIRE'S COMMUNITIES SINCE 1970  
54 Portsmouth Street, Concord, NH 03301 | (603) 224-7867 | [www.nhacc.org](http://www.nhacc.org)

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**G. Wesley Robertson**  
Amherst  
*President*

**Rep. Michele Peckham**  
North Hampton  
*Vice President*

**Kristen Murphy**  
Dover  
*Treasurer*

**Tom Duston**  
Chesterfield  
*Secretary*

**Gene Harrington**  
Londonderry  
Immediate Past President

**Laura Alexander**  
New London

**Rich Gerard**  
Tamworth

**Margie Ives**  
Derry

**Paul Kotila**  
Fitzwilliam

**Tracy Tarr**  
Gilmanton

## STAFF

**Nicholas J. Coates**  
Executive Director  
[nicholascoates@nhacc.org](mailto:nicholascoates@nhacc.org)

**Emily Lord**  
Program Manager  
[emilylord@nhacc.org](mailto:emilylord@nhacc.org)

Town of Deerfield  
Conservation Commission  
8 Raymond Road  
PO Box 159  
Deerfield, NH 03037

February 20, 2015

Dear Serita,

We are very proud of the work that your conservation commission is doing and we look forward to working with you in the future.

Please find 5 copies of the latest Forest Notes from the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire in which we wrote about Deerfield.

Please feel free to be in touch with us anytime. You can reach me at (603) 224-7867 or [nicholascoates@nhacc.org](mailto:nicholascoates@nhacc.org).

Keep up the great work!

Sincerely,

Nicholas J. Coates (Nik)  
Executive Director

---

From the Spring, 1965 issue of *Forest Notes*: “The development of the town’s natural resources and the protection of watersheds and open spaces should not be left entirely to state and federal governments. This act gives an opportunity at the grass root level to evaluate and plan for resource management within the town and according to its needs and desires.”

---

vation commissions in towns that passed open-space bond articles to understand what worked and what didn’t. They are also working to educate themselves on what the impacts on taxpayers could be and how they will answer the tough questions that will come up. They realize they are going to have to do a lot of listening and a lot of communicating one on one with voters.

Only two more classrooms can be added to their local school before there will be a need for a new school. Long-time commission member Dick Hocker said enough housing lots are already available for development to increase the school age population above the school’s capacity.

“It’s not if, but when it’s going to happen, and we’re not prepared for it,” Wood said.

### **Real Protection for Town Forests in Deerfield**

A paraphrase of a refrain that I’ve heard in my visits to conservation commissions is, “trees don’t need schools.”

But one of the misconceptions about town/city forests is that they are permanently protected properties. In fact, the legislative body of municipalities (town meeting or city council) can vote to establish town/city forests and can just as easily vote to remove a town/city forest designation. In New Hampshire, the statute enabling local designation and management of town/city forests provides two options for municipal forest managers: a forestry committee created for that purpose, or, by vote of the legislative body, a conservation commission may manage the town or city forest.

In Deerfield, conservation commission members, along with former member and current volunteer Frank Mitchell, have been working for the past four years to ensure their town forests were permanently protected with conservation easements. Their approach was to focus on publishing articles in the local newspaper in support of the easements and accompanying the articles with photos of the properties.

Their first article focused on laying the groundwork for the values of public conservation lands such as the importance of wildlife habitats, how they provide places for people to enjoy and how they contribute to the town’s character. The article also explained how the conservation commission wanted to make sure the forests remain a permanent living legacy for the town and was taking two steps: first, working with the town’s forestry committee to create management plans; and second, to permanently protect the land. They also highlighted that easements deliver on the wishes of the people who donated the land.

The article was brief and promised more details to follow in the coming weeks. The second article provided a brief profile and map of each of the properties and highlighted that as owners of these public properties, residents had the right to enjoy them and to share the responsibility for managing them. The commission got its message across while also educating residents about the opportunities they have to enjoy nature.

The final article highlighted the fact that the conservation commission and the select board had introduced a warrant article for voters to consider. It took a question and answer format with questions like:

- Why would the town permanently conserve our Town Forests and Conservation Areas?
- Have other towns done this?
- What are conservation easements and how do they work?
- Who would be responsible for administering and monitoring of the conservation easement?
- Will this cost the taxpayers?
- What’s the next step?

Success didn’t happen overnight, but commission members’ work finally came to fruition when voters at Town Meeting in 2010 and 2011 voted in favor of putting conservation easements on the properties. The last easement project was completed last summer.

The result is that eight properties totaling almost 700 acres are permanently conserved under easements. The commission shared one final article in the local paper in September that thanked voters for their support and again went through the benefits of the easements.

### **Water quality watchdogs**

When conservation commissions began in New Hampshire, some of our rivers were so polluted that signs warned people away from swimming or fishing in them. Conservation commissions were the driving force, with the Forest Society’s support, for legislation in 1973 to extend conservation commissions’ authority to wetlands protection. Commissioners got to work on the local level to convince their selectmen of the need for sewers and sewage treatment plants and over the last 50 years have been a critical part of cleaning up and protecting water quality across the state.

Today the state statute allows a conservation commission to request time to investigate an application for a dredge-and-fill