

## Deerfield Conservation Commission 2015 Annual Report

Established by vote of the town on March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1967, the *Deerfield Conservation Commission (DCC)* is a volunteer, seven-member commission, appointed for three year terms by the Board of Selectmen. State Law *RSA 36-A* calls for the establishment of conservation commissions for the “proper utilization and protection of natural resources and the protection of watershed resources.” The commission may also, with approval by the Select Board, acquire land as conservation areas or town forests, and then manage those areas. In a nutshell, conservation commissions:

- Research and document the Town’s natural resources
- Develop long-term plans and strategies for the protection of important places
- Work to permanently protect the most ecologically valuable lands
- Provide educational programs and hikes, educate the public about renewable energy
- Work with the Forestry Commission to manage town lands for timber production, recreation and wildlife
- Advise other boards on the importance of the town’s natural resources
- Provide comment on wetland permits to the NH Department of Environmental Services
- Make comments and recommendations on sand and gravel excavation and restoration plans to the Planning Board.

Primary work by DCC members and volunteers for 2015 is outlined below:

### LAND CONSERVATION

On January 24<sup>th</sup> 2015 the DCC was proud to accept Bear-Paw Regional Greenway’s *Regional Annual Conservation Award* on behalf of the Town of Deerfield. Deerfield was recognized for the town’s support and DCC’s work to complete and record the Conservation Easement Deed for seven Town Forests and Conservation Areas. The document, recorded July 1<sup>st</sup>, in 2014, was four years in the making, and now conveys permanent protection to over 500 acres of town-owned land, and, in keeping with the wishes of its former owners, will ensure that it be enjoyed by Deerfield’s future generations in perpetuity. The commission was also recognized for its work by the *NH Association of Conservation Commissions*, citing the accomplishment in the 2015 winter edition of *Forest Notes*, a publication of the *Society for the Protection of NH Forests*. The following parcels are currently protected by the deed:

|                             |                    |           |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| • Arthur Chase Town Forest  | Tax Map 414 Lot 73 | 40 Acres  |
| • Dowst-Cate Town Forest    | Tax Map 416 Lot 16 | 100 Acres |
| • Hart Town Forest          | Tax Map 403 Lot 2  | 71 Acres  |
| • Lindsay Conservation Area | Tax Map 415 Lot 30 | 58 Acres  |
| • McNeil Conservation Area  | Tax Map 406 Lot 12 | 63 Acres  |
| • Weiss Town Forest         | Tax Map 416 Lot 18 | 93 Acres  |
| • Wells Town Forest         | Tax Map 411 Lot 39 | 80 Acres  |

The commission looks forward to adding the ~178 acre Edyth H. Boisvert Town Forest (Map 404 Lot 002) to this list of permanently preserved land with the conveyance of an easement, which will guarantee that it also be conserved in perpetuity while continuing to be owned and managed by the Town. DCC began the initial steps of the easement process in 2015.

DCC encourages the donation of land and conservation easements as a means of preserving Deerfield’s forests and fields, its rivers and streams, and its wetlands and wildlife. Over the years, with the support of the residents of the Town and through the generosity of private landowners, DCC

has facilitated the acquisition of properties that enhance the creation of greenways and provide suitable wildlife habitat; all in keeping with the *Open Space Plan* of Deerfield's *Master Plan*, and the *NH Wildlife Action Plan*.

## **STEWARDSHIP**

DCC, through its members, volunteers and partners, continues to monitor the Town's Forests and Conservation Areas to ensure that they are in compliance with the terms of their respective easements. Oversight and maintenance of the trails, including re-blazing and bridge repair, is ongoing, and DCC routinely addresses reported easement violations related to their use.

DCC continues to partner with the Forestry Commission and a professional forester to develop forestry management plans for the Town Forests. Controlled timber harvests have been completed on the Dowst-Cate and Weiss Town Forests and are anticipated for additional conservation parcels in keeping with the recommendations in their respective management plans. Completed management plans for five of the seven Town Forests and Conservation Areas can be found on the DCC web page of the Town website, at [townofdeerfieldnh.com](http://townofdeerfieldnh.com).

DCC has also collaborated with Deerfield's Road Agent and Select Board in the ongoing battle to control invasive plants, specifically, *Japanese Knotweed* and *Phragmites*, the spread of which poses a threat, not only to private land, but also to Deerfield's conservation areas and wetlands. Strategies for funding eradication efforts will continue in 2016.

One of DCC's functions as a conservation commission is to review and provide its input on wetland and shoreland permit applications for subsequent approval by the *NH Department of Environmental Services* (DES). As such, the DCC will be playing an important role in the review of and response to the *Wetlands Application* associated with the *Northern Pass Transmission Project* and is working closely with the *Lamprey River Advisory Committee*, the *NH Association of Conservation Commissions* and the *Deerfield Select Board Northern Pass Liaison* to evaluate and ensure that Deerfield's wetlands, occurring along the proposed 7.5 mile corridor, will not be adversely impacted as a result of the project.

## **TRAILS COMMITTEE**

The fledgling, six-member Trails Committee, or "Trails Club" as it is unofficially known, was formed in 2014, and is up and running with more than 140 contributors sharing their experiences on its Facebook Page. An April pot-luck event drew 40 attendees, and featured a speaker on trail building. The Committee has been called upon to assist in DCC's ongoing stewardship efforts in the marking and upkeep of Deerfield's extensive network of trails, maps of which can be found on the DCC webpage of the Town website. Both the DCC and its *Trails Committee* encourage the public to get out and enjoy these marked scenic footpaths, and to connect with all the wonderful natural resources Deerfield has to offer. New members are ALWAYS welcome!

## **PARTNERSHIPS AND OUTREACH**

The Commission has worked to educate residents in employing best management practices for their land, informing them about the existence of and threats posed by invasive plants, recommending erosion-control techniques, and employing soil analysis. DCC has also been able to benefit from the resources provided by the *University of New Hampshire*, partnering with educators and students who have put their knowledge and skills to work in the accomplishment of these efforts.

DCC strives to address the concerns of residents who have come to the Commission for advice and support, and routinely reviews activity affecting *Shoreland Protection* and *Regulated Wetlands*. In addition, the DCC continues to partner with neighboring towns in their mutual efforts to protect common waterbodies such as Pleasant Lake, Northwood Lake, and the Lamprey River. Entities with which the DCC routinely partners are:

- Board of Selectmen – On easements and other DCC activities
- Town Energy Committee
- Forestry Commission – Coordinating stewardship activities and town forest timber harvests
- Planning Board and Town Planner
- Pleasant Lake Preservation Association
- Bear-Paw Regional Greenways
- Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP)
- Lamprey River Watershed Association
- Lamprey River Advisory Committee
- Southern NH Planning Commission

In an effort to keep the Board of Selectmen and the Town informed of its activities, the DCC submits monthly updates to the Board to be shared at its meetings. DCC also publishes its minutes, members list, forest management plans, trails maps and a wealth of conservation-related materials on the Conservation Commission web page on the town website at [townofdeerfieldnh.com](http://townofdeerfieldnh.com)

## **2015 DCC MEMBERS AND MEETINGS**

DCC members are volunteers who give freely of their time in service to the Town. Serita Frey is the Chair and Erick Berglund is the Financial Officer. Deb Campelia, Wes Golomb, Kate Hartnett, Dave Linden, and Jim Deely are members. Frank Mitchell and Al Jaeger contribute their time for easement monitoring and assisting with land protection projects. Alan Perkins volunteers his time for trail maintenance and has cleared and blazed trails on several Town-owned conservation properties. Volunteer Herb McKinney directs his energies toward “tagging” the Town Forest perimeters. Kelly Roberts was the architect of and continues to be the creative force behind the Conservation Commission webpage at [townofdeerfieldnh.com](http://townofdeerfieldnh.com). Judy Marshall is the DCC clerk, providing organizational support to the Commission. The DCC meets on the second Monday of each month at 7 pm. Interested citizens are always welcome to attend the meetings. Volunteers are also sought to assist with various conservation-related tasks and projects.



BEAR-PAW REGIONAL GREENWAYS PRESENTS THIS AWARD TO THE TOWN OF DEERFIELD FOR ITS WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH BEAR-PAW TO CONSERVE SEVEN TOWN FOREST PROPERTIES IN 2014. WE THANK THE CITIZENS OF DEERFIELD, WHO VOTED TO CONSERVE THE TOWN FORESTS, AND THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION, THE SELECT BOARD AND OTHER TOWN OFFICIALS WHO SUPPORTED THE PROJECT. TOGETHER WE CONSERVED OVER 500 ACRES OF IMPORTANT FOREST LAND, WETLANDS, WILDLIFE HABITAT, CULTURAL FEATURES, STREAMS AND OTHER NATURAL ATTRIBUTES WHICH WILL PROVIDE BENEFITS INTO THE FUTURE. THIS REQUIRED DILIGENT WORK, PATIENCE AND GOOD HUMOR, ALL OF WHICH WERE DISPLAYED BY TOWN REPRESENTATIVES. THIS IS ONE OF THE LARGEST CONSERVATION PROJECTS IN WHICH THE TOWN OR BEAR-PAW HAVE BEEN INVOLVED, MAKING IT A HISTORIC MILESTONE FOR BOTH. THE BOARD, STAFF AND MEMBERS OF BEAR-PAW REGIONAL GREENWAYS THANK THE TOWN OF DEERFIELD FOR CHOOSING BEAR-PAW TO HELP TO ACHIEVE ITS CONSERVATION GOALS FOR THE TOWN FORESTS.

PRESENTED JANUARY 24, 2015

