

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

To the Honorable Board of Selectmen:

The Carver Conservation Commission is charged under M. G. L. Ch. 40 section 8C with several primary functions: acquiring and managing open space; and the general protection and stewardship of our town's natural resources and, under M. G. L. Ch. 131 section 40, administering the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act. More specifically, we are charged with open space protection and wetlands protection. Open space is important to our town for several reasons: it improves a town's bond rating; slows residential growth, thereby helping to reduce future property tax increases; protects our drinking water quality by preventing storm-water runoff; protects our drinking water quantity by providing recharge to our aquifer; increases property values; and provides a high quality of life. The Commission also administers the Carver Wetlands Protection Bylaw. Wetlands are especially important to our town: they provide flood and pollution control; recharge and purify our groundwater and aquifer; provide habitat, food, and cover for wildlife; and maintain high-quality fish and shellfish environments both locally and downstream. Clean pure groundwater is vital to Carver because most residents and many businesses—including our primary industry, cranberry production—depend on private well water. In addition, the town lies over one of the largest sole-source aquifers in the state. About fifty percent of the Town of Carver is wetlands and about eighty-five percent of the town is open space. Although we have permanently protected almost 577 acres of open space, most of our open space—almost 12,656 acres—is not permanently protected.

The Commission is authorized by the Wetlands Protection Act and the Carver Wetlands Protection Bylaw to hold public hearings on all projects within 100 feet of any wetland, including cranberry bogs (unless that project is agriculturally-exempt), and within 200 feet of a perennial river or stream. In 2012, the Commission held public hearings for 14 new requests for permits and projects near wetlands and 11 Certificates of Compliance were issued on other outstanding projects. All applications were permitted. All permits and Certificates of Compliance are recorded at the Plymouth County Registry of Deeds by our staff, ensuring timely recordation of legal documents and available information for landowners, and preventing delays for landowners who may be refinancing or selling their properties. Our staff consults with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Army Corps of Engineers re: permits/regulations, keeping up-to-date with current laws. One Emergency Certification was issued to a North Carver landowner whose structure was a safety hazard and possible resource hazard and needed to be demolished.

Our Commission meetings are broadcast on Carver's cable TV channel 15 on CCAT for those residents who are unable to attend. These meetings are also posted on Carver's official website at www.carverma.org and by CCAT staff on YouTube. For more information about Conservation, our web-site can be viewed by going to the home page, looking to the left, and clicking on "Conservation Commission" under "Town Hall." We welcome public input on what information should be available.

In 2013 we continued to work collaboratively, through our Agent, with other town departments, to complete certain mandates or public service projects. Our Agent reviewed, edited, and in some cases, wrote interdepartmental documents on behalf of the Commission and at the request of various other town departments: reviewed four Technical Review Committee reviews of site plan proposals for commercial, utility, or residential project proposals for the Planning Dept.; completed revisions of portions of the Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) Plan for the Emergency Operations Dept.; produced a document detailing potential new native species plantings for the DPW's Route 58 upgrade project; and wrote a Community Preservation Act grant application for the Municipal Playground Committee to upgrade the Community Playground and maintain its ADA compliance. Our Agent also continued digital mapping of all impervious surfaces in town for the Commission and for the DPW per Environmental Protection Agency requirements and is up-dating the town's storm drainage digital maps for Conservation and the DPW's use. We also continued our participation in the town's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) 604(b) grant with other non-profit partners on water quality management planning.

The Agent/Commission continued to produce educational material for the general public such as water conservation brochures and posting documents on the Conservation page of the town website.

Our Agent serves in an administrative and coordinating capacity for the Town's Energy Program, Green Communities Program, and Stormwater Program Committee, as well as coordinating for other general, some regional, conservation issues. These include general conservation efforts of the Town, waste reduction actions initiated through the Town, energy and green communities issues initiated through the Town, and environmental compliance for issues outside the general authority of the Conservation Commission, as well as some recreational goals of town. The Town is represented by our Agent on the regional Plymouth/Carver Aquifer Advisory Committee as Carver's Delegate and the Committee's Chair. She also represents us on the in-house Local Emergency Planning Committee and the in-house Town-Owned Properties committee. The Commission and Agent continue to review any Town-owned contaminated MGL 21E sites as well as other 21E properties that are contaminating wetlands and waterways resources and, potentially, the Plymouth/Carver Aquifer, to assure groundwater and surface water quality. Our department produced 50 site-specific flood plain and/or wetland digital maps for individual members of the public and digital trail maps for the general public for the three largest Conservation lands in town. The Commission and Agent also use digital mapping to compile a database of Conservation-owned parcels for land management use, for inter-departmental use at town hall, and for public information.

The town-owned Cole Property Conservation Land in North Carver is frequently visited by the public. State rules and regulations regarding hunting and fishing must be followed at the Cole Property, as on any conservation land, including the law that no hunting is allowed within 500 feet of a dwelling or building in use, including the public drinking water supply well-house that is sited on the property. Motor vehicles are also prohibited

on the property. The Commission was proud to do its part in preserving this important property for future generations by providing the down payment on the property, and other acquisition costs, through its Conservation Trust Fund.

On the whole, however, land in Carver is still disappearing, albeit at a slower rate than in previous years. We see the current housing slump as an opportunity for land preservation, interdepartmental cooperation, and grant writing to keep the town moving forward. As Carver continues to grow, we expect wetland permit filings to increase again as houses and subdivisions are built closer and closer to wetlands. For Carver, in particular, taking more land out of residential development will reduce the need for more town services and help slow your future residential property tax increases. If we value our town's resources *and* want to slow future property tax increases, we need to continue to protect our remaining open space before there is nothing left to protect.

We thank part-time staff, Peg Blackwell and Helga Stottmeier, for their dedication, deep interest in conservation, and high organizational skills. We would like to thank all who filed with the Commission over the past year as well as those who called or stopped by with questions. The Commission works with the public to protect the resources that, in turn, protect our town. We take our public service responsibilities seriously and we welcome your questions and comments.

February 2014

James Nauen, Chair
David Eldredge, member
Daniel Fortier, member
Russell Lovaas, member
Jennifer Vaillancourt, member
Judith Ward, member

Sarah G. Hewins, Ph. D., Agent
Margaret Blackwell, Administrative Assistant
Helga Stottmeier, Office Assistant/Intern