

Conservation Administrator's Report

Jo-Anne Crystoff, Conservation Administrator

May 2018

Spring still seems to be having a difficult time arriving this year! The Conservation Office remains busy with applications for Wetlands Permits and site visits, both important undertakings in upholding the requirements of the Wetlands Protection Act here in Ayer.

The Heating Oil Spill at Page Hilltop School continues as a DEP Emergency Response, Bureau of Waste Site Cleanup project. An estimated 800 gallons of heating oil accidentally entered a drain pipe which emptied into the top of a wetland resource area.

An Enforcement Order with Cease and Desist was issued for infrastructure work on Woodland Way in the Pingry Hill subdivision in April. The developer and his site work contractor responded immediately to the stormwater system failure. Work was completed to bring the site back into compliance with the wetland permits, and the sediment deposited in the wetland was cleaned up. Other measures put in place included seeding the shoulders of the road, mulching slopes, hydroseeding lawns, and starting to construct stormwater structures. The Enforcement Order was lifted and work continues on the development.

Pond Weed Control: The second herbicide treatment of the summer is scheduled for Thursday, June 7th. Signs will be posted around the ponds and information about the treatment will be posted online. The 2017 round of treatments was very successful, and the plan for 2018 is to build on that success.

Conservation Fund: The Commission workshopped the Policies and Procedures documents with Town Manager Robert Pontbriand and CPC Chair Janet Providakes at the April 26th business meeting. Further edits were received from CPC members. Policies and Procedures will help the Commission consider parcels for purchase by providing a framework for evaluation using a set of criteria. The criteria will ensure that the Commission's goals are met when acquiring conservation property. The Commission hopes to vote to accept the Policies and Procedures at the June 28th business meeting.

Chapter 91 Dock Licenses: Sandy Pond is one of few Great Ponds in Massachusetts that is also in an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). Issuing dock licenses on behalf of the State has become a complicated and nearly impossible task. The Commission had a lengthy discussion with Town Manager Robert Pontbriand at the April 26th business meeting. The conservation administrator is in contact with DEP about how to proceed.

Land Use Team: The Land Use Team continues to meet weekly. Staff keeps current with each other's projects and offers insight, information, and advice. This meeting is an excellent way for the staff involved in land use issues in Ayer to connect with large and small projects.

MRPC (Montachusett Regional Planning Commission) grant has been awarded to the Town! The MRCP planner is working on making a series of maps to help the Commission prioritize conservation land purchases. The next meeting of the working group is scheduled for the first part of June.

As a way to keep up with Commission projects, the Conservation Commission will now hear applications for permits on the first meeting of the month, and reserve the second monthly meeting for Commission business.

Please contact the Conservation office at 978-772-8249, by email at concom@ayer.ma.us, or drop by with any questions or concerns. Thank you!