

Conservation Administrator's Report

Jo-Anne Crystoff, Conservation Administrator

January 2019

The Conservation Office continues to be busy with policy work, applications, permits, inspections, and oversight.

The Heating Oil Spill Cleanup and wetland replication across the street from Page Hilltop School continues. The wet weather and late season conditions have resulted in slower than expected progress on the cleanup, however the restoration and replication of wetland conditions has finally begun. The project is on track to remove and replace more than 700 tons of contaminated wetland soil with clean, custom manufactured wetland replacement soil. The Conservation Commission engaged the consulting services of Paul McManus, principal of EcoTec, Inc., to assist in providing oversight for the project. The Conservation Agent has been onsite and in regular contact with the Licensed Site Professionals overseeing the cleanup of oil-impacted stream channels and wetlands. The harsh winter weather has made this a challenge

The Pingry Hill subdivision requires continual monitoring for compliance with the Wetland Protection Act regulations for stormwater standards. Work on Woodland is still behind schedule for the completion of stormwater structures and the developer has turned attention to housing site development because of the weather. The site as a whole is monitored by the Sedimentation Specialist before and after storm events to check the quality of stormwater. Weekly site visits by the Conservation Agent continue to be important in maintaining the fragile stability of the development.

Ponds' Weed Control: The Commission will be assessing the treatments at the end of the summer and making a decision about how to approach the pond treatments for next year. Solitude Lake Management, the contractor for Ayer's pond treatments, attended a January Commission meeting and gave a presentation on weed control options that would fit with the Commission's goals of maintaining the good control achieved by yearly treatments. The professionals from Solitude Lake Management agreed that the treatment work had entered a maintenance phase and that the required financial cost to the Town going forward would be less than it has been in the past few years. The Commission will be requesting a proposal from Solitude for the 2019 weed control season.

Open Space Residential Development (OSRD) is allowed by right for newly proposed subdivisions in Ayer and requires a recommendation by the Conservation Commission to the Planning Board for a minimum of 50 percent of the project to be designated as open space. The Commission has received its first conservation site analyses for review before making a recommendation to the Planning Board on priority open spaces for a small subdivision off Littleton Road.

A Certificate of Compliance (COC) is the document issued on behalf of the State by the Conservation Commission that clears the Order of Conditions (OOC) from a property's title. The Request for COC Form is received by the Conservation office and a site inspection is conducted to ensure that what was permitted by the OOC was built or that the OOC expired without the project being completed. Banks, other lenders, and title companies have been requesting COCs for old projects at an increased frequency. Time consuming research is required to understand the scope of a sometimes decades old project.

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 both large and small projects.

As a way to keep up with Commission projects, the Conservation Commission hears applications for permits on the first meeting of the month, and reserves the second monthly meeting for Commission business. There is, of course, some flexibility with this schedule.

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!