

Conservation Administrator's Report

Jo-Anne Crystoff, Conservation Administrator and Agent

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The State of Emergency instituted by the arrival of Covid-19 continues to effect work in the conservation office. The Commission is meeting remotely. Town Hall is closed to the public. However, the Commission no longer has discretion regarding opening public hearings during the State of Emergency and is required to adhere to the requirements of the Wetlands Protection Act Regulations.

Enforcement Orders against John Hillier and a Notice of Intent that he filed were discussed at Public Hearings. Mr. Hillier's attorney, David McCay, was present for the hearings. The Commission is challenged in working toward resolution of these issues with Mr. Hillier.

The Ayer Solar II B Notice of Intent and peer review process has concluded. The Commission issued an Order of Conditions for the project this month. As part of the required Natural Heritage Endangered Species Program review of this project, 39 acres of open space will be placed in permanent protection through a Conservation Restriction.

The Stratton Hill subdivision, off Wright Road, submitted an Abbreviated Notice of Resource Area Delineation (ANRAD) to the Commission for the wetland resource area boundaries. The Commission issued the Order of Resource Area Delineation (ORAD) this month.

Weed treatments for Ayer's ponds are completed for this year and the Commission has received the end-of-season survey report from the contractor. The Commission will study this report to assess the effectiveness of the project and make plans for the upcoming year.

Violation and enforcement work on the part of the Commission has increased. The Commission has responded to multiple resident reports of Wetland Protection Act violations this fall. In most cases, issuing a violation letter and making an educational site visit is sufficient to bring compliance.

Applications for wetland permits continue to be received by the Commission despite the changes brought by Covid-19 to Ayer. The Commission's agendas are full to capacity with public hearings, public meetings, discussions, and enforcement matters. Working using the Zoom platform is challenging but does seem to bring a higher level of public participation to the meetings.

Please contact the Commission office with any questions at 978-772-8249 or concom@ayer.ma.us