

Conservation Administrator's Report

Jo-Anne Crystoff, Conservation Administrator and Agent

February 2021

The State of Emergency instituted by the arrival of Covid-19 continues to effect work in the conservation office. The Commission continues to meet remotely. Town Hall is closed to the public. The Commission no longer has discretion regarding opening public hearings during the State of Emergency and is required to adhere to the timelines in the Wetlands Protection Act regulations open a hearing within 21 days of receipt of an application.

John Hillier has appealed the Order of Conditions issued by the Conservation Commission to DEP. Mr. Hillier has work done in a Resource Area and the buffer zone without a permit on Central Avenue. DEP is reviewing his appeal and will contact the Commission to arrange a site visit during which both parties will present their arguments.

Treatments for Ayer's ponds are being considered for summer 2021. The Commission received two proposals in response to an RFQ. The Commission hopes to continue treating weeds with a maintenance-level program pending approval of the warrant article at Town Meeting for funding this work.

Applications for projects continue to flow into the Commission office. A time control plan for packed agenda help to keep the Commission on track for meetings with limited time due to Zoom and staff constraints. As spring approaches and an even busier agenda is anticipated, the Commission will assess how best to accommodate the demand. The amount of new development coming to Ayer that requires Conservation Commission permits is straining our capacity to manage a large number of permit applications and oversight.

Looking ahead to March, we are hopeful to submit a grant application to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council for signs to mark Ayer's waterways. A resident has generously volunteered her time to write the grant in coordination with the Commission and the Agent.

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