

## **Conservation Commission Monthly Report**

**Jess Gugino, Interim Conservation Office Administrator**

**January 2022**

**Jo-Anne Crystoff's resignation** from her position as the Commission's Conservation Administrator was submitted in mid-December, following a 4 week leave of absence prior to that. The Commission has continued its work relatively uninterrupted. We will be looking for a replacement shortly. The Commission also met with Town Manager Pontbriand at its 1/6/2022 meeting to discuss this job vacancy going forward, including the need to move this position out of the clerical union as soon as is practicable. The Commission also expressed its concern that the position as is will not be competitive in terms of salary and job title with other towns also looking to fill similar positions.

**The Year End Report for the 2021 pond treatments** for invasive and nuisance aquatic vegetation in Sandy Pond, Flannagan Pond and Pine Meadow Pond was submitted in December by Water & Wetland LLC. The report included recommendations for 2022 treatments based on end-of-season monitoring of the ponds following their treatments. The Commission was overall very pleased with the quality of the treatments this past year as well as the detailed Year End Report. It will shortly be reviewing an RFP for issuance for the 2022 treatment program based on the recommendations submitted.

**The Waterways signs project**, funded by a grant from the Wild and Scenic Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Stewardship Council as part of a National Park Service program, is continuing in spite of Ms. Crystoff's departure. Commissioner Mark Phillips has taken the reins of this project and has been in contact with the Stewardship Council as well as the sign company in Chelmsford that will be used. Some adjustments to the signs had to be made to meet NPS logo requirements. In addition, the Commission will be reviewing sign locations as costs have gone up, and there is also a need to eliminate signs along Rte. 2A given the stringent requirements, and fees, that MassDOT imposes.

**A Willow Road/Rte. 2A Intersection Improvement** project submitted by MassDOT is currently under review by the Commission. The project seeks to replace the temporary signal system with a permanent one, put in left turn lanes on 2A, Willow Road and Bruce Street (the other side of the intersection), as well as a shared use pathway on 2A approaching the intersection from either side. The Commission is reviewing this project carefully because, as the applicant's representative said, all of the stormwater treatment provided in this project is in Littleton, but all of the environmental impact is in Ayer – by the culvert under Willow Road where Bennett's Brook passes through on its way to Spectacle Pond, the Town's primary water source. DPW Director Van Schalkwyk has been consulted and will also be attending the next Hearing on this project as well.

**The Commission continues to review** numerous applications for other projects, from a variety of smaller homeowner projects to New England Power soil borings and construction projects and more. The Commission is also pursuing projects with the DPW on better beaver management (2021 having been a very wet year with a lot of beaver dam flooding issues having arisen), as well as on seeking public access, especially for kayaks and canoes, to Flannagan Pond.

Please contact the Conservation office with any questions at [concom@ayer.ma.us](mailto:concom@ayer.ma.us) or 978-772-8220 x143