

## Report of the Conservation Commission

The Fremont Conservation Commission had another busy year advising local Boards on a variety of issues related to conservation, doing site visits, and working with regional, and State organizations on local conservation projects. The following is a summary of the Commission's 2016 activities.

Early in the year, the Conservation Commission worked to have the Beede Spaulding Conservation Land (Map 3 Lot 56) designated as a Town Forest in accordance with NH RSA 31:110. In March, the voters passed the Ordinance designating this conservation land a Town Forest. Thank you to all the voters that supported this effort. This Forest can be accessed by a trail (Cooperage Trail) connecting Beede Hill Road to the cul-de-sac at the end of Spaulding Road. There is parking at either end for 3-4 cars.

The Commission spent a good deal of its time communicating with and working with Southeast Land Trust (SELT). Partnering with SELT, the Commission hired Mark West of West Environmental to do a "Wetlands Functions and Values Assessment" for the Horsburgh properties which resulted in an \$85,000 NHDES ARM Fund grant. With his grant, SELT will be finishing the transactions needed to conserve 343 acres of the Horsburgh properties. The newly conserved land includes 4,107 linear feet of Brown Brook, a tributary to the Piscassic River. The property includes several streams that flow into Brown Brook and 3,135 linear feet of an unnamed tributary to the Exeter River. The property includes nearly 71.5-acres of high value wetlands, including portions of 5 Prime Wetlands, and 29 vernal pools. The property is almost entirely ranked as "Highest Ranking Habitat in the State." In addition, the property is within a "High Priority" site for Blanding's Turtles identified in the "Conservation Plan for Blanding's Turtle and Associated Species of Conservation Need in the Northeastern United States"

Throughout the year, the Conservation Commission has advised the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment on matters related to wetland habitat protection, water quality protection and aquifer protection. Five projects of particular note this past year were: (1) The review of a request seeking a variance to alter the surface configuration within the 100 foot prime wetland buffer on Tax Map 5, Lot 35 owned by John Galloway in order to construct a storm water detention/infiltration system; (2) The review of a request for a Variance on Lot 2-1-2 by Richard Hewett and Lisa Darling in order to construct a garage that would be partially in a wetland buffer; (3) The review of a variance request for building a garage at 19 Brentwood Road within a wetland buffer; (4) The review of a plan and maps for an application for an asphalt plant on Shirkin Road [Map 5 Lot 34] owned by Mr. Patterson; (5) The review of a request for an expedited Wetland Dredge and Fill Application for Map 6 Lot 22 on Leavitt Road in order to construct a driveway to access the lot.

The Commission was not able to accomplish a variety of its objectives due to the fact the Town voted not to fund a budget for the Commission. Commission members missed many training opportunities due to the lack of funding to attend these training sessions. The Commission was

not able to pay membership dues to organizations it previously networked with effectively isolating the Commission from information and help thereby compromising the Commission's effectiveness to do its job.

Throughout the year, the Commission has worked with Open Space to help them maintain, improve, and plan for the Town Forest's trails. This group of volunteers has given many man-hours toward these ends and their efforts are much appreciated. You can learn more about your Town Forests by visiting "The Fremont Town Forest" Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/FremontTownForests>). The site contains lots of current information, maps, pictures and video content. Don't forget to "Like" it! In addition, the Commission has attended meetings and begun working toward getting the Town Forest Trails on an interactive website called Trailfinder.com.

If you are interested in conserving the natural resources of the Town of Fremont, the Fremont Conservation Commission is seeking volunteers! What does a Conservation Commissioner do?

- Help manage Town land for recreation and wildlife
- Steward and implement the Town Forest and Wildlife Management Plans
- Provide educational programs and hikes in your Town Forest in partnership with Open Space
- Work to establish conservation easements on properties in town
- Advise other boards on matters related to the Town's natural resources

To learn more about protecting Fremont's natural resources, please contact the Conservation Commission or attend one of the regular meetings on the first non-holiday Monday of the month at 7:00 pm at the Town Hall. For more information, visit the Town's Website.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Knee, Chairman  
Fremont Conservation Commission

### **Report of the Open Space Advisory Group**

Since its inception in 2003, the Fremont Open Space Advisory Group has worked in conjunction with the Fremont Conservation Commission, the Board of Selectmen, and the residents of Fremont to ensure that Fremont's rural past as well as Fremont's future is properly protected. 2016 was a busy year for Open Space volunteers. Besides the normal trail maintenance work, our group was involved in numerous town forest activities from new trails to a free guide service.



The major accomplishment in 2016 was the development of the new BARRED OWL trail in Glen Oaks. This 1.1 mile footpath winds itself along the northern perimeter of the Town Forest and is our most challenging trail in Glen Oaks. A loop from the parking lot is about 2.5 miles long. Signs can be found at both ends of the trail. It is

currently marked with blue painted blazes and a few pink ribbons. Painted metal blazes will be added in 2017. We also hope that 2017 will see this trail connected to the South East Land Trust (SELT) trail system which abuts Glen Oaks.

In Oak Ridge South, and working with the local Boy Scouts, we reclaimed a 600' section of trail that had been abandoned. This trail segment has been cleared and metal blazes installed. Arrow signs can be found on Meetinghouse and Tavern Roads at the ends of this ridge trail. Metal blazes were also installed on the Marsh trail.



Sam Harris and Jack Karcz installing "Barred Owl" sign posts.



We led FOUR hikes in the Fall of 2016. These hikes revisited many of the traditional Town Forest trails, but also introduced people to some other hidden gems that when combined with our Town Forest Trail System gives Fremonters even more places to roam. Admittedly, weather impacted the turnout for some of these hikes, but all four found at least a few diehards looking for a challenge!

The Open Space Group has also instituted a Free Guide Service Program. This is designed to reach people who are looking to visit our town forests, but could benefit from customizing the



"where" and the "when." This is an excellent way for you "newbies" to get out and enjoy our Town Forests!

Some of us spent a wonderful afternoon with the local Girl Scouts, introducing them to Glen Oaks and discussing the local animal populations and their habitats. It was a pleasure to work with these enthusiastic 4th graders.

Open Space is always looking for new members. Most of our time is spent "in the woods" doing, rather than in a meeting room talking. Come join us! Prune a branch. Move a log. Or just enjoy our woods!

Respectfully submitted,

Dennis Howland, Chair  
Sam Harris  
Matthew Thomas

Rich Cooper  
Betty Harris

Jack Downing  
Jack Karcz

Barred Owl Hike – Fall 2016



Photos courtesy of Dennis Howland