

Report of the Conservation Commission and Open Space Advisory Group

Report of the Conservation Commission

In 2021 the Fremont Conservation Commission continued focus on public awareness and preservation of natural resources. The Commission meets monthly and has the following responsibilities as one of the Town's Land Use Boards:

- Help manage Town land for recreation and wildlife.
- Steward and implement the Town Forest and Wildlife Management Plans.
- Provide educational programs and support trail maintenance in your Town Forest in partnership with Open Space Advisory Group.
- Work strategically with landowners and conservation organizations to preserve critical properties in Town.
- Coordinate review of properties for potential conservation with Open Space Advisory Group.
- Provide technical review and comment on state wetland permit applications on behalf of the Town.
- Advise other Boards on matters related to the Town's natural resources.

The following are some of the highlights from 2021:

- During the month of September 2021, the Commission heralded awareness to support a State-wide BioBlitz to document species (plants, animals, insects, fungi) found on town-owned lands all over New Hampshire using iNaturalist. This statewide event is anticipated to be a yearly event! The Commission also cosponsored a special expert-led identification Dragon Fly Walk with UNH Cooperative Extension in conjunction with the NH BioBlitz Project that took place at Oak Ridge which by all accounts was successful and enjoyed by many.
- Accomplished a long overdue update to the Town's Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) which was adopted into the Master Plan in April 2021. The NRI is a significant Appendix to the Town's Master Plan and includes updates to existing and new mapping of natural resources and data with goals for conservation and protection of natural resources. These important and timely updates will be used by the Planning Board and others as we chart a course for responsible land use planning goals that also protect our critical natural resources.
- Having completed the NRI, the Commission forged ahead to work with Open Space Advisory Group forming an Open Space Task Force to review the Town's Open Space Report. They met on X occasions learning in depth about old and new criteria used to rank properties for potential land conservation. A grand compilation of their efforts has been incorporated into a detailed Open Space Report which will be released in 2022.
- In 2022, members of the Commission will work in subcommittee with the Planning Board to create a Natural Resources Chapter for the Master Plan.
- Reviewed and commented on several land use applications before the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment with the potential to impact wetlands, wetland buffers, and other natural resources.

- Continued preparations for forest management in the Oak Ridge North area including meetings and planning with forestry and wetland consultants.
- Supported Open Space members in the construction and maintenance of Town Forest trails (signage, trail maps, youth outreach).

The Conservation Commission expended approximately \$3,050 of the \$3,494 budgeted in 2021. Most of the budget was spent on clerical services required to maintain meeting minutes, edit and finalize various documents and reports. Underspensing was most obvious in training while the nation continues to try to open and network again. The remaining budget of \$443.92 was deposited into a budget residual fund. Members will discuss use of these funds for special projects in 2022 and/or on efforts to forward our mission of land preservation and protection of natural resources.

We are always seeking new Commission Members that are interested in conserving and bringing awareness about the natural resources of our Town. To learn more, please contact any member of the Conservation Commission, visit the Town's website, or attend one of the regular meetings on the first Monday evening every month at the Fremont Town Hall. You can also watch us live on Fremont Community Television live and YouTube or rebroadcast on Vimeo. Learn more about your Town Forests by visiting trails or "The Fremont Town Forest" Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/FremontTownForests>). We couldn't be more accessible. Please feel free to contact Leanne Miner anytime at 603 895 3200 x 306 or landuse@fremont.nh.gov with questions, comments or interest in becoming a volunteer on the Conservation Commission.

Respectfully submitted,

Leanne Miner, Chair



Scenic photo taken by Bill Knee, Vice Chair and long-time member of the Conservation Commission. This is a cattail marsh viewed from Louise Lane. Warrant Article 14 is proposed for voter consideration in 2022 to designate this 10-acre parcel as part of the Oak Ridge Town Forest.

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 our rural past as well as our future is properly protected.

Due to COVID 2021, things slowed down for the Open Space volunteers. Besides the normal trail maintenance work, we made improvements to a number of trails in our town forests. This was due in part to the increased use of the trail system and by a more diverse user group. In Glen Oaks, we improved some drainage in two places on the Forest Loop.



Open Space volunteers were also very active with the South East Land Trust (SELT) organization. Besides helping to build and install kiosks, the group helped to route, clear, and blaze trails in the Spruce Swamp Conservation area. This includes a connector trail to the Glen Oaks Barred Owl Trail. It is now possible to park at the G.O. parking lot and walk all the way to the B52 crash site. Of course, if you access this trail from the SELT parking lot on Route 125, it is a much shorter walk!

Here the group works on routing the Barred Owl Connector in SELT to a large glacial erratic which is on the way to the Barred Owl Trail.



Next, we have installed a sign post at the boundary between SE LT and Glen Oaks, and finally a sign post inside SELT, which will eventually have SELT signage explaining the intersection and where the trails go.





For safety reasons, we only led one hike this year. We had a Fall Foliage Hike with 25 attendees! We walked the Barred Owl Trail including the SELT Barred Owl Connector Trail. Dennis gets the group ready, reminding them about hunting season and the local bear, and then Sam leads the group down Forest Loop towards Barred Owl.



The Open Space Group 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
Anne Beliveau
Pat DeBeer
Mary Kaltenbach

Stan Almond
Rich Cooper
Betty Harris
Jack Karcz

Susan Almond
Bruce DeBeer
Sam Harris

Photos courtesy of Dennis Howland and the Open Space Advisory Group