

Report of the Conservation Commission

The Fremont Conservation Commission had a very busy and successful year stewarding and promoting the Town's natural resources. Working with the Open Space Advisory Group, local and regional conservation partners and professionals, we accomplished much in 2023. The Commission has a monthly public meeting on the first Monday of every month to discuss and vote on conservation expenditures, manage Town forests, report on conservation projects and Open Space Advisory Group activities, review and provide advisory input on land use applications before the Planning and Zoning Boards, review wetland permits, and respond to Town conservation inquiries and needs. We have several Alternate Member positions open. Meetings are open to the public, broadcast on FCTV, and available online. Our Town web page contains reports, trail maps, permit application information, natural resource



mapping, and reports. We are actively working on several projects so check in often for updates.

Meet your 2023 Conservation Commission: From right to left around the table Jack Carson, Alternate Member; Anne Beliveau, Member; Leanne Miner, Chair; Bill Knee, Vice Chair; Rich Cooper, Member; Cindy Crane, Member.

The following are some of the highlights from 2023:

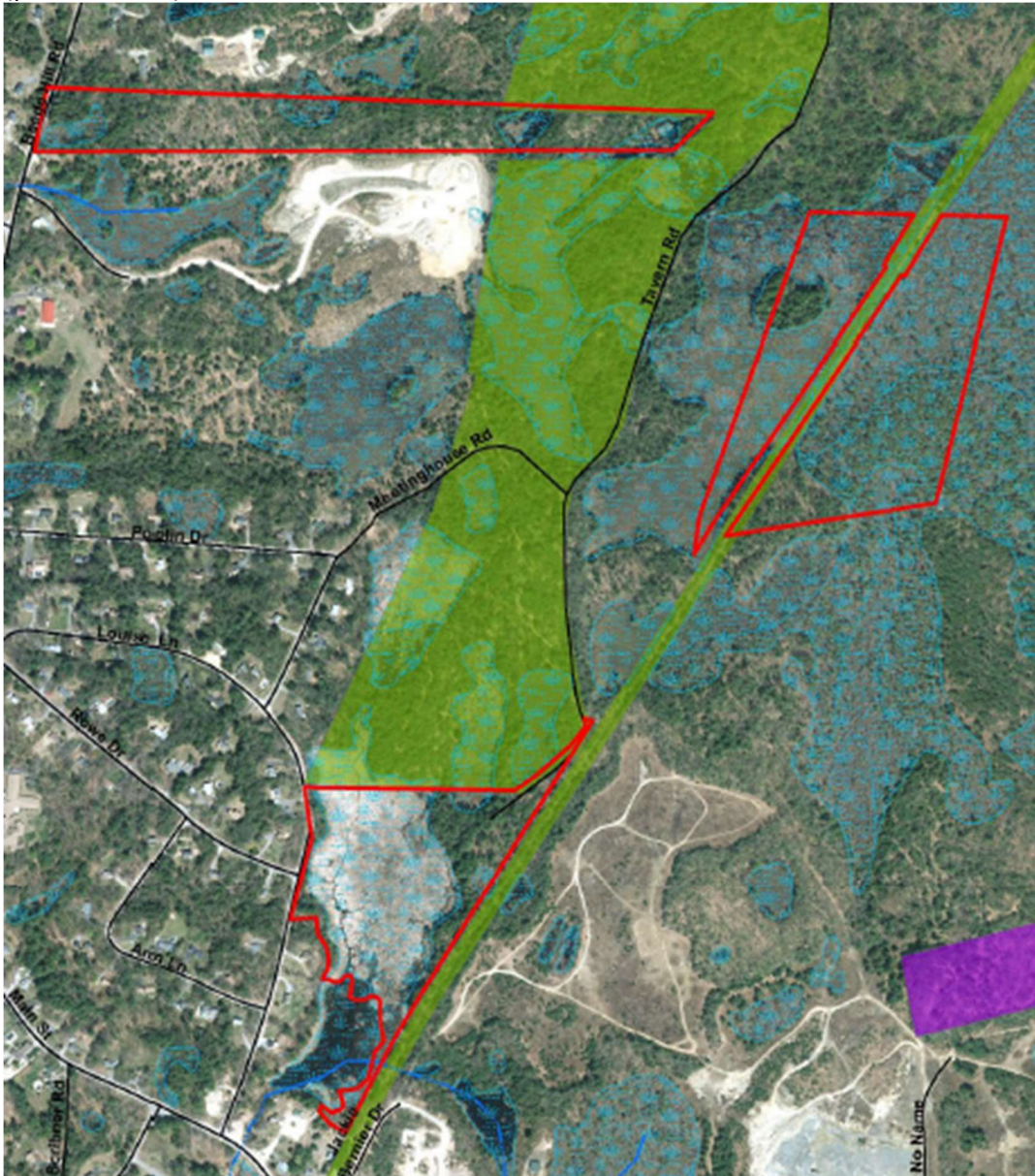
- Reviewed and commented on the Conservation Easement for the newest Open Space Preservation Development off Scribner Road, Heritage Farm Estates.
- Received \$30,000 in State Conservation Funds (Moose Plate Grant) and \$10,000 in conservation funds from Fields Pond Foundation (a conservation organization) to purchase 24 acres for the expansion of the Glen Oaks Conservation Area. Thanks go to Pat deBeer for preparing this application.
- Ms. Miner worked with the Rockingham Planning Commission (the RPC) to generate mapping of Town-owned properties for use by the Commission and other land use Boards to consider municipal needs where potential grant funds may be applied for.

- Mr. Cooper maintained communications with SAU leadership and NH Fish and Wildlife to implement protective measures for endangered turtle species known to nest in Town-owned land.
- Collaborated with SELT and Fremont's Open Space Advisory Group to prepare a Trail Guide for their new Spruce Swamp Conservation Area Trail Head which was opened in June 2023 from Route 125 in Brentwood.
- Designed and purchased turtle crossing signs that you'll see posted at critical crossings in the spring and summer.
- Met with Moreno Forestry and a representative from Philips Exeter Academy to discuss and collaborate on timber harvest activities which we anticipate will result in substantial cost savings in 2024.
- Ms. Miner managed and coordinated with experts and Town Departments to prepare a proposal to have a portion of Class VI portion of Tavern Road designated as an Emergency Lane.
- Sponsored a speaking event with Ms. Chris Borgan, local turtle rehabilitator. The talk was well attended and we got to meet some of Chris's charges and meet new Turtle Rescue folks for Rockingham County.



- Purchased *Big Trees of New England* which is chock full of photos and maps for trails in the region. The book is available at the Fremont Public Library.
- This year brings more expertise to conservation efforts as members Miner and Knee met with Peter Steckler, NE Conservation (former Nature Conservancy specialist) to discuss conservation projects and potential funding for land conservation. Ms. Miner also met with and actively coordinates conservation efforts with Lori Sommers, the new Coastal Watershed Land Conservation Manager working at SELT.

- The Commission was approached in the spring of 2023 by a property owner on Beede Hill through the Southeast Land Trust to conserve property that creates a “notch” in Town land holdings of Oak Ridge Town Forest. After successful negotiations focused on protecting property natural resources (wetlands, vernal pools, upland forested buffer) Commission members in a joint Public Hearing with the Select Board voted to accept a generous donation of 17 acres of land for conservation. The Commission is actively working with SELT’s Lori Sommer and the Forest Society to place conservation easements on this new parcel (Map 3, Lot 59) and several recently acquired town forest and spruce swamp lands (photo below).



- We recognize that there is a lot of development pressure in this region and it’s going to be here for some time. There are critical natural resources in some of the larger tracts of land in town that could benefit landowners and residents through preservation. There are many ways to conserve land aside from outright sale or donation such as open space land

development or keeping your land and getting fair market value for a conservation easement. If you or someone you know is interested in conserving land through sale or donation please contact any member of the Conservation Commission, Select Board, or SELT to discuss your options. Anyone of us will be happy to assist or put you in touch with the right people to help you make important informed decisions.

- Members Cooper and Miner of the Commission volunteered to be on the committee for preparing the Town's Source Water Protection Plan with technical guidance provided through a NH Department of Environmental Services Source Water Grant. John Roderick, Fremont Representative from Exeter Squampscott Rivers Local Advisory Committee (ESRLAC) also joined the committee.

Administrative Matters: The Conservation Commission expended its entire operational budget of \$3,721 in 2023. Most of the budget was spent on clerical services required to maintain meeting minutes, grant preparation, and coordination of reporting and legal documents. The Conservation Commission proposes increasing the 2024 budget to include \$1,500 for professional conservation services so we can get the assistance we need to meet and exceed Fremont's goals for conservation including strategic planning for more grant funds.

The Town of Fremont has representation on the Exeter Squampscott Rivers Local Advisory Committee (ESRLAC www.exeterriver.org) thanks to John Roderick, Alexa Brown, and Ellen Douglas. Fremont is seeking representation on the Lamprey River Advisory Committee <https://www.lampreyriver.org>.

Join us in our mission! We are always seeking new Commission Members that are interested in conserving and bringing awareness about the natural resources of our town. You don't have to be a professional in the sciences, you just need to be interested and willing to participate. To learn more, please contact any of our members, visit the Town's website, or attend one of the regular meetings on the first non-holiday Monday evening every month at the Fremont Town Hall. You can also watch us on FCTV and Vimeo live or recorded.

Respectfully submitted,

Leanne Miner
Chair of the Conservation Commission

Report of the Open Space Group Advisory to the Fremont Conservation Commission

Considering the rainy spring, summer, and fall seasons of 2023, it was a productive year for the Fremont Open Space Group in terms of projects completed and in process. The Fremont Open Space Group could not have done it without the great support of our core members and volunteers who showed up and worked hard on the various projects. We thank and appreciate everyone who participated!

April 2023 - Installation of the Fremont Interpretive Nature Trail sign (below), map, and plantings at the Fremont Public Library by Bill Knee and Sam Harris. The sign was designed to educate residents about the plants and animals of various species living along Town trails, and how they work together to form a thriving and enduring habitat.



Late April - Installation of the gate posts at the road entrance/ trailhead of the SAU 83 School District property off Jackie Bernier Drive. This road entrance will be closed to all motorized vehicles for the protection of the nesting Blanding's Turtle, an endangered species known to inhabit and breed in this area. Motorized vehicular

traffic will be prohibited on this property from May 1 to August 1 each year so these turtles can proliferate.

May 2023 - Installation of the Dennis Howland commemorative sitting bench at a scenic overlook on the Marsh Trail in the Oak Ridge South Town Forest. The sitting bench and engraved testimonial were created by Fremont resident Bruce deBeer. This overlook memorializes and honors the memory of our friend Dennis Howland, a committed Fremont citizen, multi-town Board member, and founder of the Fremont Open Space Advisory Group. Dennis's hard work and vision is a big reason Fremont has such a fine Town Forest trail system. On the afternoon of May 28, 2023, former friends, neighbors, colleagues, and family of Dennis Howland gathered at the memorial bench overlooking the marsh to honor and pay tribute to his life. A group of around 20, hiked the trail from the Fremont Library leading to the memorial site. Immediately after the service, Mary Kaltenbach (spouse) invited everyone back to her home for a picnic, refreshments, and neighborly socializing.



Dennis' wife Mary Kaltenbach stands by the commemorative bench.



A view to remember Dennis by.

May 2023 – Open Space and Conservation Commission members have a great collaborative relationship with our neighboring SELT staff. attended the SELT sponsored Trails Day recognize the opening of Spruce Swamp hike some trails and do a little trail work. Conservation Area is on Route 125 in of the land is in Fremont. One of the SELT Trail, leads to the site of the 1959 B 52 crash Trail goes by a very scenic view of Spruce with the Fremont Glen Oakes Town Forest Kelliher, Garrison, and Glen Oakes total nearly 575 acres for wildlife and recreation and 6.6 miles of easy to moderate trails.



This year members event to officially Conservation Area, The SELT access to this Brentwood, but most trails, the Kelliher area. The Garrison Swamp and connects trail system. The Conservation Areas

November 2023 - In early November, the Fremont Open Space Group organized a work party to complete the ground preparation and installation of 16 signposts for the Fremont Interpretive Nature Trail, along the Depot Trail at the southern end of the Oak Ridge South Town Forest. The party worked hard digging post-holes, sawing out tree roots, lugging wheel-barrows full of heavy sand, and finally installing the 16 posts in one afternoon. A hearty and well-deserved thank you goes out to Jack Karcz, Bill Knee, Paula Rand, TJ Schipano, Mike Ahearn, Bruce DeBeer, Sam Harris, and Rich Cooper. Special thanks is also extended to Leon Holmes Jr and the Fremont Highway Department for providing the sand and moving wood chips for the task. Credit for a great portion of the cost of materials for the nature trail goes to the Aja Mahoney Fund, a gift from a former long-time Fremont School teacher and educator. Special recognition also goes to Bill Knee, long-time Fremont Conservation Commission member and Co-Chair, for his vision and design of the interpretive trail project.



From left to right:
Jack Karcz, Bill Knee,
Rich Cooper, Bruce
deBeer and TJ
Schipano

December 2023 -
Fremont Open
Space Group - Fall
Hike - December
10. The weather
was not ideal for
hiking, but a
handful of hearty
souls braved the

elements for an 80-minute hike from the Southeast Land Trust (SELT) Spruce Swamp Forest entrance off Route 125 in Brentwood to the Rockingham Rail Trail entrance on North Road in Fremont. The hike traversed through the area of the 1959 B-52 crash site, with several pieces

of crash debris still in evidence on the route. The route then continued through the Tuck Woods Conservation land, through Phillips Exeter property to the Rail Trail.

To cap-off the Town Forest final work agenda for 2023, the Fremont Open Space Group assisted in a project with a Boy Scout Eagle Scout candidate, Jake Higginbottom, a young Karlin Road resident. Jake's project was to build a viewing platform on the site of the Dennis Howland memorial bench overlook, on the Marsh Trail in the Oak Ridge South Town Forest. He was responsible for acquiring all the materials, planning, structural design, and organizing the labor to complete the task.

The Fremont Open Space Group was commissioned to oversee and provide a portion of the manpower for getting the building materials to the building site. Along with several helpers



from the Boy Scouts, once again, Fremont Open Spacers turned out in good numbers to support the effort. Attribution for their "lumber transport" contribution goes out to Bill Knee, Jack Karcz, Paula Rand, TJ Schipano, Sam Harris, Rich Cooper and Bruce deBeer.

Special thanks to Bruce in overseeing and "hands-on" construction of the build phase of the structure. Bruce's engineering background and skill in woodworking was invaluable in

the fine result attained. Special credit is especially acknowledged for Jake Higginbottom-Eagle Scout, his Dad Mark and immediate family. Congratulations and THANK YOU to Jake for a job well done!

Respectfully submitted,

Rich Cooper, Chair
Fremont Open Space Advisory Group

Photos courtesy of FCTV, Leanne Miner, Sam Harris and Open Space / Conservation Comm Members

"The earth will continue to regenerate its life sources only as long as we and all the peoples of the world do our part to conserve its natural resources. It is a responsibility which every human being shares. Through voluntary action, each of us can join in building a productive land in harmony with nature."

~ Gerald R. Ford