

Deerfield Conservation Commission 2016 Annual Report

Established by vote of the town on March 14th, 1967, the *Deerfield Conservation Commission* (DCC) is a volunteer, seven-member commission, appointed for three year terms by the Board of Selectmen. State Law RSA 36-A calls for the establishment of conservation commissions for the “proper utilization and protection of natural resources and the protection of watershed resources.” The commission may also, with approval by the Select Board, acquire land as conservation areas or town forests, and then manage those areas. In a nutshell, conservation commissions:

- Research and document the Town’s natural resources
- Develop long-term plans and strategies for the protection of important places
- Work to permanently protect the most ecologically valuable lands
- Provide educational programs and hikes, educate the public about renewable energy
- Work with the Forestry Commission to manage town lands for timber production, recreation and wildlife
- Advise other boards on the importance of the town’s natural resources
- Provide comment on wetland permits to the NH Department of Environmental Services
- Make comments and recommendations on sand and gravel excavation and restoration plans to the Planning Board.

Primary work by DCC members and volunteers in 2016 is outlined below:

LAND CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION

Bear-Paw Regional Greenways, acting on behalf of the DCC, was successful in securing a **grant from The Merrimack Conservation Partnership in the amount of \$17,079**. This grant will be used to cover a portion of DCC’s transaction costs for placing an easement on the *Edythe H. Boisvert Town Forest*.

Town Forest status and authorization to convey the conservation easement was granted by vote of the Town on March 14, 2014. Conveyance of the easement will guarantee that the Boisvert property will be conserved in perpetuity while continuing to be owned and managed by the Town. When completed the easement will add ~178 acres to the over 600 acres of permanently protected, town-owned land.

• Freese Town Forest	Tax Map 410 Lot 32	178 Acres
• Arthur Chase Town Forest	Tax Map 414 Lot 73	40 Acres
• Dowst-Cate Town Forest	Tax Map 416 Lot 16	100 Acres
• Hart Town Forest	Tax Map 403 Lot 2	71 Acres
• Lindsay-Flanders Conservation Area	Tax Map 415 Lot 30	58 Acres
• McNeil Conservation Area	Tax Map 406 Lot 12	63 Acres
• Weiss Town Forest	Tax Map 416 Lot 18	93 Acres
• Wells Town Forest	Tax Map 411 Lot 39	80 Acres

Deerfield is fortunate to have the above six town forests and two conservation areas. They have been granted to or acquired by the Town to preserve their conservation values and to support a variety of recreational activities.

The Deerfield Conservation Commission has considered various types of recreational uses of these lands. Many are acceptable because they have very little impact on conservation values. Some are not acceptable because of the significant impact they do have on soils, wildlife habitat, and/or water quality.

The following are two lists of recreational activities, permitted and not permitted. They apply to all Deerfield conservation lands and town forests.

Permitted *	Not Permitted
Walk	Snowmobile
Hike	ATV
Cross country ski	Dirt bike
Snowshoe	Mud truck
Wildlife observation	Mountain biking
Orienteering	Firewood collection
Trail running	Camping
Dog walking – leash and scoop	Fires
Photography	Large group competitive games

- * Hunting and free rock climbing are permitted in certain of these lands and forests. (Check the Deerfield Conservation website for the sites. townofdeerfieldnh.com.)
- * Please respect – Carry in; Carry out

Note: Alcohol is not permitted in our town forests and conservation areas

In March of 2016, the residents of Deerfield once again gave the DCC a vote of confidence when it defeated Warrant Article #18 which would have stripped away its primary source of funding for conservation projects. The Conservation Fund received \$41,282 representing 50% of the Land Use Change Tax collected by the Town in 2016. These funds make it possible for DCC to carry out its mission to work strategically to protect Deerfield's rural character. DCC is grateful for the Town's continued support for conservation in Deerfield.

DCC encourages the donation of land and conservation easements as a means of preserving Deerfield's forests and fields, its rivers and streams, and its wetlands and wildlife. Over the years, with the support of the residents of the Town and through the generosity of private landowners, DCC has facilitated the acquisition of properties that enhance the creation of greenways and provide suitable wildlife habitat; all in keeping with the *Open Space Plan* of Deerfield's *Master Plan*, and the *NH Wildlife Action Plan*.

Grants and alternative sources of funding, such as New Hampshire's *Land & Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP)* and other lesser known resources, are routinely sought to supplement conservation funds used for acquiring and protecting these parcels.

STEWARDSHIP

Cyclical monitoring of all of Deerfield's Town Forests and conservation areas ensures that they are in compliance with the terms of their respective easements. This past year, it was brought to DCC's attention that dumping and the use of motorized recreational vehicles was causing significant damage on a number of the Town's conservation parcels. DCC members posted notices reminding visitors to these areas that only non-motorized access is allowed on Deerfield Town Forests and other conservation lands.

DCC is grateful to its members, volunteers and partners for the many hours donated in accomplishing this annual task, ensuring that Deerfield remains a faithful steward of these ecologically valuable lands.

DCC continues to partner with the Forestry Commission and a professional forester to develop forestry management plans for the Town Forests in keeping with the recommendations outlined in their respective management plans. Completed management plans for six of the eight Town Forests and Conservation Areas can be found on the DCC web page of the Town website.

Wetland permit application review and input is one of the functions that DCC performs as part of its stewardship responsibilities as they relate to Deerfield's wetlands and shorelands. This year DCC independently reviewed and provided input on the *Northern Pass Transmission (NPT)* project's wetland and shoreland permit applications for subsequent approval by the *NH Department of Environmental Services (DES)*. During that process, DCC members met with *Eversource* representatives to assess potential impacts of the project to Deerfield's wetlands. The Conservation Commission, through its member representative, continues to make significant contributions as it actively participates with the Board of Selectmen and Planning Board in the town's *Motion to Intervene*, which allows Deerfield to join with other towns in the *Site Evaluation Committee* approval process for the NPT project. Participation empowers the town to exert oversight and protect Deerfield's interests as the project progresses.

TRAILS COMMITTEE

A six-member Trails Committee or "Trails Club" as it is unofficially known, was formed in 2014 and continues to grow with more than 200 contributors sharing their experiences on its Facebook Page. The Committee has been called upon to assist in DCC's ongoing stewardship efforts in the marking and upkeep of Deerfield's extensive network of trails. Volunteers and members have cleared and marked a number of existing trails in the Dowst-Cate Town Forest and the Lindsay-Flanders Conservation Area. A new section that will create a loop has also been proposed for Lindsay-Flanders. A Fall Trails Day in October provided an opportunity for trail clean-up and public outreach. Both the DCC and its *Trails Committee* encourage the public to get out and enjoy these marked scenic footpaths, and to connect with all the wonderful natural resources Deerfield has to offer. New members are ALWAYS welcome!

PARTNERSHIPS AND OUTREACH

DCC welcomed the opportunity to reach out and educate residents about the threats the Town faces from Japanese Knotweed and Phragmites which were among the invasive species highlighted in a display at Deerfield's 250th anniversary celebration. The educational presentation was also awarded a blue ribbon and kudos from the judges later that year at the Deerfield Fair!

DCC strives to address the concerns of residents and organizations that have come to the Commission for advice and support, and routinely reviews activities affecting *Shoreland Protection* and *Regulated Wetlands*. In addition, the DCC continues to partner with neighboring towns in their mutual efforts to protect common waterbodies such as Pleasant Lake, Northwood Lake, and the Lamprey River. Entities with which the DCC routinely partners are:

- Board of Selectmen – On easements and other DCC activities
- Town Energy Committee
- Forestry Commission – Coordinating stewardship activities and town forest timber harvests
- Planning Board and Town Planner
- Pleasant Lake Preservation Association
- Bear-Paw Regional Greenways
- Land & Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP)
- Lamprey River Watershed Association
- Lamprey River Advisory Committee
- Southern NH Planning Commission

In an effort to keep the Board of Selectmen and the Town informed of its activities, the DCC submits monthly updates to the Board to be shared at its meetings. DCC also publishes its minutes, members list, forest management plans, trails maps and a wealth of conservation-related materials on the Conservation Commission web page on the town website at townofdeerfieldnh.com

2016 DCC MEMBERS AND MEETINGS

DCC members are volunteers who give freely of their time in service to the Town. Serita Frey is the Chair and Erick Berglund is the Financial Officer. Member Kate Hartnett is DCC's Northern Pass representative. Deb Campelia, Wes Golomb and Jim Deely are members, who along with volunteers Frank Mitchell and Al Jaeger contribute their time for easement monitoring and assisting with land protection projects. Alan Perkins volunteers his time for trail maintenance and has cleared and blazed trails on several Town-owned conservation properties. Volunteer Herb McKinney has directed his energies toward "tagging" the Town Forest perimeters. Kelly Roberts was the architect of and continues to be the creative force behind the Conservation Commission webpage at townofdeerfieldnh.com. Judy Marshall is the DCC clerk, providing organizational support to the Commission.

The DCC meets on the second Monday of each month at 7 pm and interested citizens are always welcome to attend the meetings. Volunteers are also sought to assist with various conservation-related tasks and projects.

DCC's Trails Committee also invites those wishing to connect with Deerfield's natural resources to check out its *Facebook* page to see what's going on with over 200 fellow trail enthusiasts. Volunteers are always welcomed to assist with trail maintenance and marking. The *Trail Committee* contact is **Jim Deely** jim@deelys.net. Trail inventory and maps can be found at:

http://townofdeerfieldnh.com/Pages/DeerfieldNH_BComm/Conservation/Trail%20Maps

As the DCC, enters its 50th year, it is seeking volunteers to share in its mission of protecting the magnificent beauty and heritage of Deerfield for future generations of Deerfield Citizens. If you are interested in preserving your town's open spaces, wetlands and natural resources, please contact **Serita Frey** at serita.frey@gmail.com or join us at our meetings.

Deerfield Conservation Commission

Serita Frey, Chair