

Deerfield Conservation Commission 2019 Annual Report

The Deerfield Conservation Commission 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 and manage land as conservation areas or town forests. 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
- 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 land use plans submitted to the Planning Board

Work done in 2019 by DCC members and volunteers is outlined below:

LAND CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION

Conservation land in Deerfield includes both privately-owned and Town-owned land protected by conservation easements granted to qualified land trusts such as the Society for the Protection of NH Forests, Bear-Paw Regional Greenways, the Southeast Land Trust of NH, Rockingham County Conservation District, the USDA Wetland Reserve Program, and others.

The DCC encourages both the donation of land and of conservation easements as a means of preserving Deerfield’s forests and fields, its rivers and streams, wetlands and wildlife. Over the years, with the strong support of Town residents, and the generosity of private landowners DCC has facilitated the acquisition of properties that enhance and support the Town’s conservation goals.

Guided by criteria contained in the Deerfield Open Space Plan (DOSP) of Deerfield’s Master Plan, and the NH Wildlife Action Plan, open space protection focuses on properties that are rich in high quality conservation values including a parcel’s location within Deerfield’s green infrastructure, the existence of important soils, its proximity and contribution to the protection of wetlands, streams, surface waters, lakes and wildlife habitats (including wildlife corridors) and its role in connecting large, unfragmented ecologically sensitive areas. Additional considerations include:

- Potential linkages to existing open space
- The environmental sensitivity and importance of the parcel
- The existing threat of continued development
- Outdoor recreation potential
- The aesthetic benefits to the general public and preservation of the Town character
- The Cost and availability of the parcel including the financial impact of removing the parcel from development (cost of residential services vs. open space costs and benefits)

The above criteria can be found on pages 25 and 26 of the *Deerfield Open Space Plan* at <https://www.townofdeerfieldnh.com/sites/deerfieldnh/files/uploads/openspace.pdf>

As demonstrated by the March 26th 2019 Harvard Forest study, land conservation, both private and public, boosts local economies. *“The study, published in Conservation Biology, is the first of its kind, estimating the local net impacts of both private and public land conservation”.* <https://harvardforest.fas.harvard.edu/news/study-land-conservation-boosts-local-economies>

Nancy Mathes Conservation Easement - In 2019 the DCC collaborated with Bear-Paw Regional Greenways to complete the acquisition of a conservation easement on the 50.07-acre privately-owned Mathes property on North Rd. A stream that feeds the Lamprey River bisects the property, and along with the abutting McGarry easement, forms an unfragmented block of green space in excess of 100 acres. The easement was conveyed to Bear-Paw Regional Greenways, and the Town of Deerfield was granted an executory interest in the property.

In addition to numerous privately-owned conserved parcels, there are currently 996 acres of town-owned parcels in Deerfield that are permanently protected by conservation easements.

• Arthur Chase Town Forest	Tax Map 414 Lot 73	40 Acres
• Boisvert Town Forest	Tax Map 404 Lot 2	185 Acres
• Freese Town Forest	Tax Map 410 Lot 32	178 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
• Marston Pendleton Conservation Area	Tax Map 409 Lot 54	128 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

Funding for conservation projects comes from a mix of sources including donations, grants, and the Conservation Fund. The Conservation Fund is a major funding tool of the Conservation Commission for carrying out its mission to protect Deerfield open space. The Conservation Fund is supported by Land Use Change Tax (LUCT) revenues which are paid to the Town by landowners when properties are removed from current use status. Per the Town vote on March 14, 2006, 50% of the LUCT revenues are transferred to the Conservation Fund. Conservation Fund monies are routinely supplemented by donations and grants, such as those from the Land & Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP).

In 2019, a transaction grant of \$16,000 from the Merrimack Conservation Partnership was secured that covered the surveying costs associated with the conveyance of an easement to Bear-Paw Regional Greenways that now permanently protects the Boisvert Town Forest.

STEWARDSHIP

Annual monitoring of Deerfield's Town Forests and conservation areas ensures that they comply with the terms of their respective easements. In addition, DCC responds to resident reports of wetland disturbances, safety issues, unauthorized cutting, dumping, and ATV activity on conservation parcels and in wetland areas.

In addition to conservation easement monitoring, wetland and shoreland permit application review and input is one of the functions that DCC performs as part of its stewardship responsibilities. Along with residential applications, DCC reviews utility applications to the Deerfield Planning Board for *Conditional Use Permits* and to the NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) for *Major Impact Wetlands Permits* for proposed maintenance projects affecting wetlands in Deerfield's utility rights-of-way. Based on its reviews, DCC has been able to express concerns and offer recommendations to the Planning Board and NHDES including adherence to best management practices, protection of natural and endangered species, and requests for periodic monitoring of the work sites both during and upon completion of these projects.

DCC was also able to work with residents to expedite the processing of their seasonal dock permits.

DCC is grateful to its members, volunteers and partners for the many hours donated to ensure that Deerfield remains a faithful steward of its ecologically valuable lands.

The DCC Trails Committee invites those wishing to connect with Deerfield's natural resources to check out the ***Deerfield Trails Club*** Facebook page to see what's going on with over 300 fellow trail enthusiasts. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1416712141954085/>.

Volunteers are always welcomed to assist with trail maintenance and marking. Trail inventory and maps can be found at:

<https://www.townofdeerfieldnh.com/sites/deerfieldnh/files/uploads/trailmapspb.pdf>

Visitors are encouraged to freely roam Deerfield's conservation areas but are reminded that only non-motorized access is allowed on Deerfield Town Forests and other conservation lands, and to leave "*nothing but footprints*" behind.

***Permitted and Prohibited Uses
On all Deerfield Town Forests and Town-Owned Conservation Lands***

Permitted *	Not Permitted
Walking	Snowmobiling
Hiking	ATV Use
Cross country skiing	Dirt biking
Snowshoeing	Mud trucking
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.

* Please respect – Carry in; Carry out

Note: Alcohol is not permitted in our Town Forests and Conservation Areas

PARTNERSHIPS AND OUTREACH

DCC strives to address the concerns of residents and organizations that have come to the Commission for advice and support. 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 initiatives
- 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

This year, at the request of Deerfield’s Town Planner and as part of DCC’s mandate to ensure “proper utilization and protection of natural resources and the protection of watershed resources” members collaborated with the Planning Board to update the ***Deerfield Zoning Ordinance Section 210 - Wetlands Conservation District***. *The goal was to arrive at revised language that was consistent with current definitions in the State of New Hampshire Wetlands Regulations (which are based on definitions established by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers), and to define the extent of the district’s jurisdictional boundaries.*

DCC Submitted an application on behalf of the *Deerfield Community School* to UNH Cooperative Extension for its ***NH BioBlitz***, a program geared to identify plants, animals, fungi and insects on town-owned lands. DCC continues its commitment to work with DCS students on future projects as it has in the past.

DCC MEMBERS AND MEETINGS

Members were excited to preview the long-awaited handbook **“Trails for People and Wildlife” – Guide for Planning Trails that allow People to Enjoy Nature and Wildlife to Thrive”**.

The guidebook, funded by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and developed by NH Fish and Game can be used to “...*assess existing trails and site new trails in the most wildlife-friendly way. This mapping tool highlights areas particularly important for wildlife and areas that would be more suitable for trail development.*” **DCC member and UNH Extension Wildlife Outreach Program Manager Haley Andreozzi was one of the editors of the guide.**

<https://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/trails/documents/trails-for-people-wildlife.pdf>

Member Brian Adams was appointed by the BOS as Deerfield’s representative to the *State of New Hampshire Department of Natural and Cultural Resources’* Bear Brook Steering Committee, formed to update the 1994 management plan for the state park.

Member Wes Golomb is in the process of reestablishing the Town’s Energy Committee.

The conservation-minded goal of the committee is “...*finding economically beneficial energy projects that lower taxes, energy consumption and Greenhouse Gas emissions, and help get us to the 2030 Net-Zero goal in our Master Plan*”

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. Members in 2019 included Haley Andreozzi, Wes Golomb and Brian Adams. Volunteers Frank Mitchell, Al Jaeger, Will Frey and Alan Perkins contribute their time to easement monitoring, trail maintenance, and research, and to assist with land protection projects. Judy Marshall is the DCC clerk, providing organizational research and support to the Commission. The DCC is grateful to **ALL** the many volunteers who have given freely of their time in the name of conservation.

DCC continues to seek volunteers to share in its mission of protecting the magnificent beauty and heritage of Deerfield for future generations and to assist with various conservation-related tasks and projects. If you are interested in preserving our town’s open spaces, wetlands, and natural resources, please contact **Serita Frey** at serita.frey@gmail.com or join us at our meetings.

The DCC meets on the second Monday of each month at 7 pm at the GB White building and interested citizens are always welcome to attend the meetings.

Deerfield Conservation Commission
Serita Frey, Chair