

Deerfield Conservation Commission 2020 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
- Comment and make recommendations on land use plans submitted to the Planning Board

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.

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
▪ Edythe H. Boisvert Town Forest	Tax Map 404 Lot 2	185 Acres
▪ Freese Town Forest	Tax Map 410 Lot 32	178 Acres
▪ Dowst-Cate Town Forest & Park	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

Visitors are encouraged to freely roam Deerfield’s conservation areas but are reminded that only non-motorized access is allowed. Carry in – Carry out. Below are permitted and not-permitted activities.

<u>Permitted Uses</u>	<u>Not Permitted Uses</u>
Non-motorized activities, including:	Motorized vehicle use, including:
Walking, hiking, trail running	ATV's, Snowmobiles,
Cross country skiing	Dirt Bikes, Mud Trucks and
Snowshoeing	Mountain Bikes
Wildlife observation	Fires or firewood collection
Orienteering	Horseback riding
Photography	Camping, large group games
Dog walking – leash and scoop	Target Shooting

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).

A joint effort between DCC, Bear-Paw, LCHIP and the NH State Attorney General's Office finalized the deed language for the easement to be conveyed on the 128-acre parcel donated to the Town by Gile Beye in 2018. Passage of a 2021 warrant article to convey an easement on the Marston parcel in Great Brook will result in the Town being reimbursed \$50,000 by LCHIP. The warrant article will also ask the Town to officially designate the parcel a Town Forest under RSA 31:111.

STEWARDSHIP

Annual monitoring of Deerfield's Town Forests and conservation areas ensures that they comply with the terms of their respective easements. This year, DCC members consulted with NH Fish & Game to formulate stewardship plans for the Corey Wildlife Open Space Subdivision (Browns Mill CE) Map 411 Lot 45-13. The Conservation Commission also responds to resident reports of wetland disturbances, safety issues, unauthorized cutting, dumping, and ATV activity on conservation parcels and in wetland areas. Particular attention over the past year has once again focused on renewed reports of ATV use, target shooting, and other violations taking place on the trails of the Lindsay-Flanders Conservation Area.

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 the Town's Boards and Commissions and with local and State organizations such as NH Fish & Game, NH Department of Environmental Services, Pleasant Lake Preservation Association, Lamprey River Watershed Association and Advisory Committee, the Southern NH Planning Commission and Bear-Paw Regional Greenways. This past year, revisions to the Deerfield Zoning Ordinance Section 210 – Wetlands Conservation District, the result of a year-long partnership with the Deerfield Planning Board, won the approval of the Town on Voting Day in March 2020.

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