

CONSERVATION COMMISSION
ANNUAL TOWN REPORT
FISCAL YEAR 2006/2007

The Conservation Commission's purpose is established by the CT General Statutes as "...the development, conservation, supervision and regulation of natural resources..." According to this legislation, the Conservation Commission must keep an index of all open areas, publicly or privately owned, including open marshlands, swamps and other wetlands, for the purpose of making the proper use of such areas; conduct research into the possible utilization of land areas of the municipality; and approve state grant-in-aid applications for programs to preserve or restrict the use of open space land to conservation or recreation purposes. In addition, the Conservation Commission may make recommendations on proposed land use changes to other municipal agencies (often by request of those agencies); recommend plans and programs for the development and use of all open areas; advertise, prepare and distribute booklets, maps, charts, plans and pamphlets for its purposes; inventory natural resources and formulate watershed management plans; acquire land and easements in the name of the municipality (in Old Saybrook, through the Land Acquisition Committee and with the approval of the townspeople); and manage municipally-owned open space property when the agency normally responsible for such duties (Parks & Recreation, by our Charter) delegates that power.

Last fiscal year, a new section of the Town's Plan of Conservation & Development that incorporates the Conservation Commission's 2004 Plan of Conservation & Open Space for Old Saybrook was approved by the Planning Commission. The plan's purposes and uses are many, including protecting the Town's natural resources, providing information to Land Use regulatory commissions as they process land use applications, and aiding the Town's Land Acquisition Committee in identifying properties of value to preserve for future generations. This document defines the ongoing work of the Conservation Commission. Present priorities have been placed on developing greenways and trail systems for passive recreation, a new Stewardship Plan for town land, developing a Natural Heritage Tour showcasing the town's natural resources, completing an Oyster River fishway system, and attaining our 21% Open Space goal.

The Conservation Commission, in conjunction with the Parks & Recreation Commission, has developed a Stewardship Plan to help manage the Town's open space land. The Stewardship Plan documents the goals, policies and program priorities that will ensure consistent and effective protection of the natural resources in our conservation areas. In addition, the Plan promotes public access and use of these areas for the purpose of education, research and recreation. Marking the boundaries of conservation areas is one aspect of stewardship responsibility that comes with designating conservation areas, in order to head off encroachment problems. The Commission is presently tacking circular disks identifying "Old Saybrook Protected Open Space" along these boundaries, and will

be doing the same for the Town's conservation easements. The new Stewardship Plan was adopted by the Board of Selectmen.

Since the Town purchased the 315-acre property in 1999 now known as the Great Cedars Conservation Area, residents have enjoyed the west side of this land accessed from a rustic parking area on Ingham Hill Road. The trails on the west side of this land lead through Atlantic White Cedar swamps and the forest as far west as the Town Park on Schoolhouse Road. For the east side of the Great Cedars Conservation Area, the Conservation Commission asked the Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District to assess natural resources on the property and recommend locations for trails that will showcase yet safeguard these natural resources. Volunteer work parties have been clearing a new trail system on Great Cedars East.

The Town received title to the 51-acre Fairbank property that is contiguous to the present town-owned Great Cedars Conservation Area and Town Park land. This property was purchased by the Old Saybrook Land Trust, with financial support from the Town and a grant from the DEP.

A new Open Space Map of the Town of Old Saybrook was completed. At the present time, open space totals 19.5% of the Town's land area. With recent Open Space Subdivision regulations passed by the Zoning Commission that require all large developments to set aside at least 50% of their land area in open space, it would appear that it is only a matter of time before approximately 25% of the land area of the Town is set aside as open space.

Robert W. Fish, *Chairman*

MEMBERS OF BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Chairman	Robert Fish	(R) [08]
Vice Chairman	Jerry Brophy	(U) [08]
	Charles Cobb	(R) [08]
	Kim Gallagher	(U) [07]
	Patrick Ingellis	(R) [07]
	Mike Kelley	(D) [07]
	Robert Siegelman	(U) [08]

LAND ACQUISITION COMMITTEE

Chairman	Robert Fish	Town Treasurer
	Jerry Brophy	Conservation Commission
	Scott Giegerich	Parks & Recreation Commission
	Howard Huelsman	Economic Development Commission
	William Peace	Board of Selectmen
	Judy Gallicchio	Planning Commission
	Charles Wehrly III	WPCA