

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

The Connecticut General Statutes establish the purpose of any Conservation Commission as “...the development, conservation, supervision and regulation of natural resources...”

The Board of Selectmen appoints 7 members for a term of 2 years each. This year we say thank you to Walt Smith reminding us of the consequences of land use on water quality, and for his contributions to the early thinking in long-term management of forest management and climate change.

During the 2015-2016 fiscal year, the Commission continued its outreach and education efforts with its publication of the “Conservation Circular” newsletter—this year’s Summer 2015 issue was “Plants for the Long Haul”, its Winter 2015 issue was “Eye of the Storm: Sea Level Rise”, and its Spring 2016 was “Don’t Waste it: Recycling”. The Commission maintains an up-to-date webpage on the Town’s website and a separate Facebook profile for its own audiences. The Commission organized and hosted “The Nature of Old Saybrook” Symposium and environmental fair, which was a smashing success with over 400 attendees, on Sunday, September 13, at which there was an LED light bulb exchange to promote energy conservation and awareness of new energy saving technologies. The town met its CT Solar Challenge goal of hitting the 100 kw mark and was the recipient of a solar array thanks to the work of its members.

The Commission concluded its sponsorship of the Sea Level Rise Climate Adaptation Committee by publishing its report on the impacts of sea level rise on Old Saybrook—a principal recommendation of which was to obtain a \$125,000 Community Development Block Grant for Storm Sandy Disaster Recovery from the Connecticut Department of Housing to fund a detailed coastal resilience study and infrastructure evaluation. The ad hoc committee worked with the Board of Selectmen to install a tide gauge at the mouth of the Connecticut River to record tide levels over time.

The Town and State DEEP closed its purchase transaction with the Trust for Public Land to begin its joint ownership of The Preserve by executing a Cooperative Management Agreement. The Commission is represented on an ad hoc advisory committee to the First Selectman in the Town’s management of 1,000 acres of woodlands in the northwest corner of Old Saybrook, commonly referred to as “The Preserve”. The Town was a DEEP GreenCircle Sustainability finalist for 2016 for its part in preserving such a large piece of open space. The Town/State developed concept plans for trailheads at each entrance and identified funding for construction through the State. The Town/State issued an Interim Loop Trail map and installed gates at each temporary entrance. The Commission studied how best to connect existing recreational trails from Old Saybrook northwesterly through Middlesex County. The Commission conducts periodic inspection of Town-owned conservation land to monitor its functions (including improvements such as fish passages). The Commission continues to look for further opportunities to conserve natural resources of the land between already-protected open spaces in Old Saybrook.

The Commission works closely with other land use groups. Presently, the Chairman represents the Commission on the Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Commission and the Aquifer Protection Agency, each of which regulate development of land that may have a negative effect on the quality of water for humans or for habitat, respectively, in identified locations. Emily Grochowski and Donna Leake serve on the Architectural Review Board. The Commission thanks both for their dedication to these additional organizations.

The Commission meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall, second floor conference room. This year, the Commission thanks Kathleen King of the Land Use Department who supported us as our administrative clerk. Sandy Prisloe, Environmental Planner, is available Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 9 a.m. to noon in the Land Use Department of the Town Hall to answer questions concerning conservation of land and natural resources in Old Saybrook.

Richard Esty, *Chairman*