

# Old Saybrook Conservation Circular

Vol. 10 / July 2020

## Historical Perspective of the Old Saybrook Conservation Commission

This April marked the 50th anniversary of Earth Day with the first Earth Day held April 22, 1970. If one reviews the Conservation Plan of Old Saybrook from November 1967 and the Open Space Plan from 1969, you will see that our town was quite forward thinking before the national declaration of Earth Day. As today's residents, we can thank those that had a vision, 50 years ago, of working to preserve what we take for granted today which is our beautiful coastline, salt marshes, wetlands and beaches within Old Saybrook boundaries.

In 1963, the state passed legislation enabling towns to designate areas as "open space land" and thus obtain federal funding to purchase said land. The Conservation Commission was established in 1965. The first plan, written in 1967, was to serve "as a guideline for protecting a portion of the natural assets which make Old Saybrook a good place in which to live." The authors recognized the importance of keeping a balance between economic growth and conserving and protecting natural areas. They laid the ground work by recommending the following areas be designated as open spaces: wetlands, beaches, greenbelts and parks, watersheds, and high ridges.

The Open Space Plan, presented in November 1969, made

further recommendations to preserve the salt water marshes, streams and watersheds and other areas. Even in 1969 there was concern over "marginal" open spaces within the congested development near the beach areas. Other recommended steps seem like deja vu. Concern for tree loss (due to Dutch elm disease) and the need for replanting program, litter lining the roads, use of pesticides and garbage disposal (even in 1969 it was noted the town dump was only a temporary solution) are issues we still grapple with today.

The good news is we now have 3000 acres of open space including the Preserve, general awareness of the impact we make on our environment and an active community with commissions/committees such as the Land Trust and Parks and Recreation. We continue to carry out the legacy laid out many years ago!

You can find the older town plans referenced above on the Old Saybrook town website: [www.oldsaybrookct.gov](http://www.oldsaybrookct.gov)

Also take note of the Watershed Health Pledge included in this newsletter and can also be found on the town website.

## Composting 101

When I was growing up, we had a milk carton near the kitchen sink that got filled with food scraps. My father, an avid gardener, collected the fruit and vegetable scraps for his compost pile which was an old metal drum. When the compost was ready, he added it to his garden beds. Sadly, I never adopted this practice until a couple months ago when I finally got a composter! It is all too easy to throw everything in the general kitchen garbage container which eventually goes to the landfill. However, composting food scraps and yard waste is very easy to do and yields many benefits.

### What is Compost?

Compost is decomposed organic matter. A compost pile, made up of items like food scraps and yard clippings, is an environment where bacteria, fungi, worms, and insects like spiders and slugs can break it down naturally. The result is a dark, earthy matter called compost that's a nutrient-rich fertilizer you can add back to the soil.

### Why You Should Compost at Home

- You're making your soil healthier. Mixing compost into your garden and/or landscape beds boosts the soil's ability to hold on to nutrients and water.
- You're using natural compost instead of synthetic fertilizers which can be overused or misused and cost money.
- You're putting less food into the landfill. According to the EPA, food scraps and yard waste make up a third of what is thrown away. When food is tossed into the landfill, it

breaks down and releases methane, a harmful greenhouse gas.

### How to Get Started

Composting is easy and there is a wealth of information on the internet. It isn't complicated or expensive. You need a small pail in your kitchen to collect the food scraps and an outdoor compost bin in your yard. You can make your own using items like wood pallets or garbage cans. Check out the website [www.homesteading.com](http://www.homesteading.com) for 45 DIY Compost Bins. Or you can buy one from local garden supply companies. *Additionally, the River COG is hosting a Compost Bin and Rain Barrel Sale. Orders must be placed by July 14th and picked up in Middletown or Old Saybrook July 18th. <https://rivercogcompostersale.ecwid.com>.*

Involve your children and make it a summer project!



The state is **named after** the Connecticut River, which bisects the state and is a major river in the U.S. The Connecticut River flows through the center of the state, south to the Long Island Sound. The **word "Connecticut" is derived from** the Native American word *quinetucket*, meaning "besides the long, tidal river". The Connecticut River flows through four states including – New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut.

# Some Easy Things to do to be Kind to our Planet

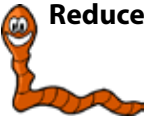
By Tom Gezo

Although the Pandemic has made it a bit more challenging, there are a few very easy things that you can do to make a difference and be Kind to our Planet.

Reduce:

**Avoid Single Use Plastics:**

- Choose a glass container for yogurt, juices, sauces, and peanut butter.
- Use a reusable bottle for water.
- Use coffee filters - not pods.
- Use Tupperware or glass containers for marinades and food storage.
- Take the Plastics Free July challenge: <http://ow.ly/6ODN50AbpZM>



**Reduce organics in your garbage:**

- Sprinkle coffee grounds and loose tea leaves in your garden or yard.
- Use a composter.
- Set up a worm box and have some fun with your kids.



**Recycle:**

- Recycle your plastic bags at the grocery store.
- Make good use of your recycling bin by checking out: <https://www.recyclect.com/>



**Plant:**

Not one of the “R’s” but important none the less.

- Incorporate native plants into your landscape. The CT Coastal Conservation District holds a native plant sale annually: <https://www.conservect.org/product-category/crccd/>
- Make your yard part of the pollinator pathway: <https://www.pollinator-pathway.org/native-pollinator-plants>



Juvenile eagle lands



Adult lands few minutes later; young appears to display territorial behavior



Adult provides guidance on ‘social structure’



Order is restored!



Adult takes leave



## Watershed Health Pledge

*I care about protecting the quality of water in our watersheds.* I know that clean rivers, streams, ponds, wetlands, and aquifers are necessary for health, recreation, and the survival of all creatures. *I pledge to be Water Smart!* I commit to taking **at least 4** of the following steps to protect our local water resources. I will strive to achieve all where appropriate for my home.

**In maintaining my lawn, gardens, and landscape, I will... (PICK 2)**

- ☐ Nurture native trees, shrubs, and flowers around my **home**. I will limit lawn areas. I will plant or allow natural buffers to grow at the edges of streams and wetlands.
- ☐ Mow my **lawn** properly, following the rule “mow high and let it lie.” I will use the highest setting on the mower, not cut more than one third of the height of the grass, and allow the clippings to lie as mulch.
- ☐ **Water** my yard infrequently or not at all. I recognize that one inch of water a week is usually fine. I will not water when the sun is high or overnight. I will recognize that brown grass is dormant, not dead. It will return to life when rain comes.
- ☐ Use **fertilizer** carefully or not at all. I will have the soil tested to determine what my yard needs. I will never apply phosphorus on an established lawn unless the soil is deficient. If necessary, I will use only a slow-release, low-concentration fertilizer or natural compost.
- ☐ Abstain from using **pesticides** and **herbicides**. I will protect children, pets, birds, and butterflies from lawn-care toxins. I will only spot treat if necessary.
- ☐ Create natural places for the **water** to soak into the ground. I will use swales or rain gardens to manage stormwater. I will limit paved areas and will use pervious materials when possible for patios, driveways, and walkways.

**In maintaining other areas around my home, I will... (PICK 2)**

- ☐ Have my **septic system** pumped out regularly.
- ☐ Fix leaky faucets and toilets, and only buy water-efficient **appliances and fixtures**.
- ☐ Use non-toxic **cleaners** and “green” building **materials** in my home.
- ☐ Learn how to dispose of unwanted prescription and over-the-counter **medications**.
- ☐ Dispose of **pet waste** in the trash or a pet-waste processor (better).
- ☐ Wash my **vehicles** in a carwash or on the grass, but not on my driveway.

Name *	I will take at least 4 steps to help keep our rivers healthy.
Email *	
Address *	
City/State *	
Zip *	
<input type="button" value="Pledge"/>	

Co-Sponsored by:  
Old Saybrook Conservation Commission and the Sustainable CT towns in the RiverCOG Region



## Insect Identification Quiz



1. Bumble Bee 2. Carrion Beetle 3. Gypsy Moth Caterpillar  
4. Carpenter Beetle 5. Mapie Leaf Foot Beetle 6. Sulphur Moth

## Conservation Commission Members

Christine Picklo, Chair  
Larry Ritzhaupt, Vice Chair  
Kelly Hartshorn, Secretary  
Thomas Gezo  
Donna Leake  
Alyse Oziolor  
Joseph Bradley, Student Rep.

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