

Conservation Matters

A monthly column focused on conservation education, as the result of collaboration among several area conservation commissions and organizations. If your town's commission or conservation organization would like to contribute articles, please contact Jessica Tabolt Halm jess_tabolt@hotmail.com

Written by: Larry Spencer, Chair, Holderness Conservation Commission

The title "Conservation Matters" was chosen for this column because it has a double meaning. First, practicing good conservation does matter. Every time we combine our trips to town and save a trip or two, it not only saves us money, but also leaves a bit more gas for the future and produces a bit less CO₂. Every time we seal leaky windows or doors, using less energy to heat our house saves us money and saves on the delivery costs of propane or heating oil. Every easement that we set aside provides vegetation that uses up CO₂ and curbs the effects of run-off so the outcomes of a major storm are less catastrophic. In fact, in the early 1900s, many mill owners along the Merrimack River pushed for the establishment of the White Mountain National Forest because they had suffered the effects of flooding and were looking for a more sustainable flow of water to run their mills.

Secondly, we will be informing you of regional conservation matters. Before I do that, I will share a bit about the nature of conservation commissions. They are established under Chapter 36-A of the New Hampshire State Statutes. Commissions are charged with ensuring "proper utilization and protection of the natural resources and for the protection of watershed resources of said city or town". Each commission maintains a database of natural features in the town; bogs, vernal pools, forest stands, creeks, rivers, ponds, rivers, etc. Commissions are composed of 3-7 members, and often work closely with selectboards and planning boards. For example, in Holderness, a member of the selectboard meets monthly with the conservation commission. Commissions only have the power of recommendation, as enforcement resides either at the selectboard or state level. Operating funds for commissions are received from their individual towns. Many towns have a Conservation Fund that results from bond issues, town budget items, or from the deposit of some portion of the Current Use Penalty tax generated in the town. Many commissions belong to the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions, which has an annual meeting the first Saturday in November.

I will be telling you more about specific conservation matters in Holderness in a future column. For right now, I would like to mention that the commission is working closely with the Squam Lakes Conservation Society on some new easements in town that will protect the headwaters of many of the small streams that flow off of Mt. Prospect. In working on these easements we are following up on suggestions of the Squam Watershed study of a few years ago and the NH Wildlife Action plan done by NH Fish and Game.

We look forward to having many of you regularly read this column. For more information on individual commissions, contact your local town office or visit the website of the NH Association of Conservation Commissions (www.NHACC.org).