

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

The Lancaster Conservation Commission is a seven-member appointed volunteer board, with associate members. The primary function of the Conservation Commission is to ensure local-level compliance with the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, the Lancaster Wetlands Protection Bylaw, and issue decisions relating thereto for all development projects in Lancaster.

The two types of applications most often reviewed by the Commission for development projects are Requests for Determination of Applicability (RDA) and Notices of Intent (NOI). The Commission also performs other regulatory functions per the Wetlands Protection Act and Bylaw, such as reviewing Abbreviated Notice of Resource Area Delineation (ANRAD) applications, requests for Certificates of Compliance (COC) for completed projects, and issuing Enforcement Orders for activities in violation of the Wetlands Protection Act and/or Bylaw.

2016 was another very busy year for wetland filings, with the Commission approving a total of 16 NOI's, 13 RDA's, and 1 ANRAD, compared to 15 NOI's and 11 RDA's in 2015. During the course of 2016, the Commission reviewed the following projects:

Filing	Applicant	Location	Action	Date
RDA	Gary Melanson	33 Runaway Brook Road	Approved	02/16/16
RDA	John Laflamme	204 Fire Road 3	Approved	02/23/16
NOI	Mark Melican	Lot #1 Colony Lane	Approved	02/23/16
RDA	Lancaster Friends of the Nashua River	Pellechia Canoe/kayak Launch	Approved	03/22/16
NOI	Mike Hodgman	637 – 851 Sterling Road	Approved	03/22/16
RDA	Pan Am Railways, Inc.	Length of Railroad ROW	Approved	04/12/16
NOI	Bolivar Vivanco	36 Ponakin Road	Approved	04/12/16
RDA	Alida Barry	207 White Pond Road	Approved	04/26/16
NOI	Michael Gill	Lot 3 Sterling Road	Approved	04/26/16
COC	Cole	995 Sterling Road	Approved	05/10/16
NOI	Brett Heffernan	237 Mill Street Extension	Approved	05/24/16
RDA	Kathy & Stuart Hughes	80 Fire Road 11	Approved	05/24/16
RDA	Trustees of Reservations	George Hill Road	Approved	06/14/16
NOI	Benters, LLC	McGovern Boulevard	Approved	06/14/16
RDA	W.P. Spratt Corp.	156 & 290 Langen Road	Approved	07/12/16
NOI	Paquette Builders	19 Jones Crossing	Approved	07/12/16
NOI	Rachel Dyer	362 Mill Street Extension	Approved	07/12/16
RDA	Mark & Karen Keenan	995 Sterling Road	Approved	07/26/16
NOI	Jill Natola	35 Holiday Lane	Approved	07/26/16
NOI	South Lancaster Academy	180-198 George Hill Road	Approved	08/09/16
COC	Lancaster Development Corp.	Devonshire Way	Approved	09/13/16

NOI (Amended)	North Lancaster, LLC	Off Lunenburg Road	Approved	09/13/16
NOI	Town of Lancaster	Thayer Athletic Fields	Approved	09/27/16
COC	John Laflamme	204 Fire Road 3	Approved	09/27/16
COC	Lancaster Development Corp.	Devonshire Way	Approved	09/27/16
RDA	Town of Lancaster	Thayer Athletic Fields	Approved	10/11/16
NOI (Amended)	YMCA of Central Massachusetts	132 Fort Pond Inn Road	Approved	10/11/16
NOI	George Hill Orchards	Lots 8 & 9 George Hill Road	Approved	10/11/16
NOI	John Johansson	113 Fire Road 11	Approved	10/11/16
RDA	Andrew Calabrese	424 Langen Road	Approved	10/11/16
RDA	Lee Pothier	59 Neck Road	Approved	10/11/16
RDA	Town of Lancaster	Eugene Christoph Memorial Forest	Approved	10/25/16
NOI	Ladd Lavallee	210 Fire Road 3	Approved	11/22/16
ANRAD	P.J. Keating Co.	Off Lunenburg Road	Approved	12/13/16

Land Protection

At the 2016 Annual Town Meeting in May, voters approved the transfer of nearly 25 acres of land (Parcels 32-17, 32-18, 32-19 on Hill Top Road) to the Commission's control and management. The Town Meeting vote included the designation of nearly twenty acres of the land (Parcels 32-18 and 32-19) as the "Eugene Christoph Memorial Wild Forest" in memory of Mr. Christoph's many years of dedicated service to the Town of Lancaster in several different volunteer capacities, including Town Moderator, Board of Selectmen, and Zoning Board of Appeals, among others. These parcels protect important wildlife habitat, including vernal pools, and the Eugene Christoph Memorial Wild Forest will never be logged, in accordance with Mr. Christoph's wishes.

Land Stewardship/Management

In the Spring of 2016 Lancaster Friends of the Nashua River cleared brush and other overgrowth to improve public access to the Pellechia Canoe and Kayak Launch, which is located next to the abandoned Ponakin Road bridge off Lunenburg Road (Route 70).

In the Summer Lancaster resident Marcello Barbieri restored an existing trail from North Main Street to the Nashua River (Parcels 18-61 and 18-62 owned by the Massachusetts Highway Department) for his Eagle Scout project. The trail was so overgrown with invasive exotic vegetation that it had become impassable; Marcello cleared out the invasives and accumulated storm debris to provide riverfront access for pedestrians and canoes/kayaks.

In the late Fall, Lancaster resident Zachary Williams completed an Eagle Scout project creating a trail network, including constructing a boardwalk over a wetland area, in the Eugene Christoph Memorial Wild Forest on Hill Top Road.

The Commission thanks the Lancaster Friends, Marcello, and Zach for their great stewardship work, and Bestway Lumber for their generous donation of time and materials for the boardwalk.

Other Business

In August the Commission welcomed new member Bonnie Mae Smith, appointed by the Board of Selectmen to serve a term of three-years per the Commission's enthusiastic recommendation.

In January, Mark Archambault, Smart Growth Circuit Rider for the Nashua River Watershed Association, presented to the Commission a slideshow titled **The Importance of Healthy River Buffers for Water and Wildlife: Benefits to your Town and Conservation.** With two branches of the Nashua River and its tributaries running through the Town, Lancaster has more land fronting on rivers than almost any other town in the region. Mark's presentation contained important information and suggestions that will be very helpful to the Commission in carrying out its responsibilities to protect these extremely important wetland resources.

What's New for 2017

Some of the Commission's upcoming activities in 2017 will include the continued conservation of open space and maintaining existing conservation land throughout the town to provide a rural environment for the residents to enjoy, working with potential developers in seeking permanent conservation easements for path systems, and similar ideas for a variety of other conservation-oriented projects. In particular, expansion of the Lancaster Town Forest has been identified as a top priority by the Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee (OSC); the Commission will continue to work with both the OSC and Lancaster Town Forest Committee to advance this ongoing project. The Cook Conservation Area will continue to be the focus of expansion efforts as well.

The Lancaster Conservation Commission meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 7:00 PM at the Lancaster Community Center. Everyone is welcome to join the Commission for these meetings and public involvement is always encouraged.

The Community Development and Planning Office coordinates all meeting schedules and is open Monday through Thursday, 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM. As always, we welcome citizen's questions, comments or suggestions. Please feel free to contact us at 978-365-3326 (David Koonce x1054 or Heather Hampson x1310), dkoonce@lancasterma.net or hhampson@lancasterma.net. For more information on conservation issues in Lancaster, please visit us on the town's web site: www.ci.lancaster.ma.us.

Respectfully submitted,

Ken Rapoza, Chair
Nathan Stevens, Vice-Chair
Peter Farmer
Ruth Anderson
Tom Christopher
James Lavallee
Bonnie Mae Smith