

## Bolton Conservation Commission FY 2021-22 Annual Report

**Rodney Parlee (Chair), Peter Van Dine (Vice-Chair/Treasurer), Brenda Cataldo, Alan Bicknell, Jean Laughman, Matt Rivers (Alternate) and Leslie Brand (Clerk)**

The accomplishments of the Bolton Conservation Commission (BCC) during FY 2021-2022 were made possible due to the perseverance, skill and effort of its members who are serving in a volunteer capacity. The BCC is mandated to conduct research into the utilization of land areas in Bolton. Conservation of the natural resources, viability, usefulness, and beauty of our town requires knowledge, observation, outreach, and work. The Commission members bring their life experience, willingness to learn and teach, and extensive time and effort toward these goals. As our town balances economic growth with conservation of irreplaceable resources it is important that all aspects of any development be carefully reviewed by utilizing all available tools to assist regulatory agencies in making the best and most informed decisions.

The BCC participated, organized, hosted, and commented on events as follows: Continued with voluntary research associated with citizen science by strategically placing temperature monitors in streams and a vernal pool in coordination with the CT DEEP Volunteer Stream Temperature Monitoring Network, Bolton Lakes Watershed Conservation Alliance (BLWCA) and the Salmon River Watershed Partnership (SRWP). The BCC now has a total of thirteen monitors that record water temperature on an hourly basis. Some streams are monitored throughout the year. Town accounts with Phoenix Lab and England Hardware are now shared with the BCC. The monitoring of our water resources from lakes and ponds, streams, vernal pools, to aquifers is of high priority. Commission member Matt Rivers now serves as a liaison with the SRWP that consists of ten towns within the watershed.

Conducted the 18<sup>th</sup> annual Riffle Bioassessment by Volunteers (RBV), a program run by the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (CT DEEP). Nine volunteers went to specified locations to collect macroinvertebrates, which live in the streambeds. The types of creatures found are identified by the CT DEEP and are a strong indicator of the health of the stream. One of the volunteers who joined us was one of the founders of the BCC RBV and former Commissioner, Ron Beaudoin and another volunteer was a student Capstone candidate.

Organized the 21st Annual Town-wide Photo Contest and completed the sale of its eleventh edition 2022 Calendar "A Town for All Seasons." The winning photos are found on the town website on the BCC webpage. The calendar, published by the BCC contains winning contest entries, illustrates the beauty of Bolton and highlights the areas of open space in town that are valued by residents and non-residents, young and old. Proceeds of calendar sales and donations help fund calendar printing, prizes, and citizen science efforts.

In October, a "**Peak Foliage hike**" was held in Freja Park and the colorful foliage still had some green hues. On a very cold "**Winter Trails Day**" with the Heritage Farm Commission as a co-leader, hikers hiked around the former farm and took the time to hug the 5<sup>th</sup> largest Pignut Hickory in CT.

In March, **“Vernal Pools Day”** at the Nathan Hale Greenway was highlighted by a hike to a picturesque vernal pool with special guest, Wetlands Professional Scientist Edward Pawlak who officially verified it as a vernal pool.

The **“Earth Day Celebration”** in April took place at Freja park with Horticulturist and Master Gardener Leslie Alexander and former Freja Park Trail Improvement member Mary Lou Amenta as the special guests. The celebration included a fairy house building contest, a wildflower walk and tree planting. Stephanie Crane and the Recreation Department teamed up with the BCC for **“Kids to Parks Day”** in May at Herrick Park.

Many special guests contributed to **“Trails Day”** at the Nathan Hale Greenway. Nationally known arborist Matt “Twig” Largess dazzled everyone with Tree ID including three Love Trees and a Triple Love Tree. Two members of the Stafford Conservation Commission, Alicia Tyson of UConn Extension and members of the public joined the event.

The BCC continued to help manage Freja Park, Bates trail in Herrick Park, Mohegan trail in Bolton Notch State Park and unofficial trails in the Nathan Hale Greenway. The commission continues to provide printed Freja park brochures, manage three kiosks, and maintains trails by holding work parties that repair bridges, clean out water bars and remove invasives with “Puller Bears,” equipment purchased with BCC funds.

For the fourth consecutive year the BCC set up an exhibit in the showcase at the Bentley Memorial Library with a Citizen Science theme. The latest exhibit was focused on recycling and a workshop at the library was held with CT DEEP, Senior Environmental Analyst, Sherill Baldwin.

The BCC Chair participated in monthly CT Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commission board virtual meetings, and commission members attended two virtual conferences. The Chair and Vice-chair attended monthly virtual meetings of the Bolton Lakes Watershed Conservation Alliance (BLWCA). The BLWCA tracked the progress of a watershed management plan and a Hatch Hill dam project. BLWCA is made up of the Bolton Lakes four watershed towns’ Conservation Commissions, Inland Wetland Commissions, members of the Friends of Bolton Lakes and Land Trusts. The Alliance is a working program of the North Central Conservation District.

The BCC also commented on the MS4 Report, adamantly opposed combining the Inland Wetlands Commission with the Planning & Zoning Commission, discussed the merits of a Noise Ordinance with resident Ron Beaudoin, learned about habitat manipulation by clearcutting in Bobcat Woods to favor the presence of woodcock from Jonathan Gourly of the Bolton Land Trust (BLT), purchased 10 customized stenciled orange safety vests to wear during hunting season designed by commission member Brenda Cataldo and circulated an overview and a “best practice” primer on “Natural Area Stewardship” of a forest.

***“UNLESS someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.”***

***-Dr Seuss, from THE LORAX***