

Bolton Conservation Commission FY 2020-21 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 2020-21 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 and possible 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:

- The BCC actively participates in the **CT DEEP Volunteer Stream Temperature Monitoring Network**. The commission strategically placed seven temperature monitors in Bolton streams. The “Pro V2 Hobo” devices placed in streams and lakes record the water temperature on an hourly basis, all year long. The data is then uploaded to a computer for analysis. New this year was the purchase and placement of a similar device into a vernal pool which may be the first such monitoring of a vernal pool in CT. These and other activities come under the title “Citizen Science” and improve the ability of professional scientists to understand and manage our environment. They require the time and training of the volunteers and the funds for equipment and analysis. The monitoring of our water resources, from lakes and ponds, streams, vernal pools, to aquifers is of high priority.
- Since 2003, the BCC has been part of the **Riffle Bioassessment by Volunteers (RBV)**, a program run by the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (CT DEEP). Each fall, BCC teams go to specified locations to collect small 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.
- Successfully organized the **20th Annual Town-wide Photo Contest** and as a result, completed the sale of its tenth anniversary issue **2020 Calendar “A Town for All Seasons”**. The winning photos may be found on the town website on the BCC webpage. For the first time non-resident's photo entries of Bolton were accepted. The town-wide calendar, published by the BCC and containing winning contest entries, clearly illustrate the beauty of Bolton and highlight the areas of open space in town that are valued by residents and non-residents, young and old. Great prizes were delivered to the doorstep of winners and awarded by the BCC. Proceeds of calendar sales and donations help fund the calendar printing, prizes and citizen science efforts.
- As promoted in the calendar, the BCC held events throughout the fiscal year. In October, a “**Peak Foliage Hike**” was held on the Bates trail in Herrick Park on a beautiful day. “Mile-A-Minute” plants were no longer visible thanks to previous workparties. Even though the “**Winter Trails Day**” was cancelled, hikers in the area once again reported unusual “Ice Circles” on the surface of Notch Pond. The March “**Vernal Pools Day**” hike in Bolton Notch State Park had good participation with special guest Ed Pawlak, a wetlands professional scientist. Vernal pool obligate species such as fairy shrimp, egg

masses of wood frogs and spotted salamanders were identified. A photo of an egg mass was uploaded to the UCONN Amphibian Tracker website. A “Tidbit” was placed in the deepest section of the vernal pool and the data will be uploaded during a drier time of the year. The **“Earth Day Celebration”** in April took place at Freja park, and the highlight was a Fairy House Building Contest. It was well attended, the prizes were appreciated, and all participants had a fun day. The June **Trails Day** was a successful event that took place on the Nathan Hale Greenway with a return of special guest Matt “Twig” Largess who is always an amazing resource. He provided useful information about flora and fauna along the trail. The participants had an enjoyable time while the Mountain Laurel was in full bloom. Three “Love Trees” were identified within ten feet of each other near a vernal pool. According to Matt “Love Trees” consist of more than one intertwined tree species growing from the same trunk. Hikers also viewed a small waterfall in a hemlock grove which is a unique feature along the trail.

- The BCC continued to help manage **Freja Park**, Bates trail in **Herrick Park**, Mohegan trail in **Bolton Notch State Park** and flagged trails in the **Nathan Hale Greenway**. The commission provided printed Freja park brochures, managed three kiosks, and maintained trails by holding numerous workparties that cleaned out water bars and removed invasives with “Puller Bears” that are equipment purchased with BCC funds.
- For the third year the BCC set up an exhibit in the showcase at the Bentley Memorial Library with a Citizen Science theme. The latest exhibit was titled **“Invasive Species: Silent, Creeping and Taking Over!”**
- Members of the BCC actively participated in the **Sustainable CT Committee** meetings which ultimately resulted in a Bronze ranking for the town. The BCC brought up at many meetings the importance of residents testing their well water.
- BCC members worked with **CT Notable Tree** experts in ranking by size three town trees. A Pignut Hickory on the Heritage Farm is now ranked #5, and two Balsam Poplars at Herrick Park are ranked #3 and #4 in the state. See <http://oak.conncoll.edu:8080/notabletrees/>
- **As a commission, members actively opposed** the Charter Revision’s Commission proposal of combining the Inland Wetlands Commission with the Planning & Zoning Commission by submitting testimony. Voters turned it down at the ballot box in November.
- The commission has continually researched the implementation of a proposal made by a birder from CAES to install an **Osprey nesting platform** adjacent to Freja park on Notch Pond in Bolton Notch.
- The BCC Chair participated in monthly **CT Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commission** board virtual meetings and members attended virtual conferences. The Chair and Vice-chair attended mostly monthly virtual meetings of the **Bolton Lakes Watershed Conservation Alliance** (BLWCA). The BLWCA tracked the progress of a draft 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.

“Never underestimate the effectiveness of a small group of thoughtfully committed Bolton residents!”