

Newton Conservation Commission Annual Report for 2023

Early in the year, the Conservation Commission received word that the Foy Conservation Discretionary Easement is going to be conveyed to the Conservation Commission sometime during this year. This will be an additional 16 acres that will increase the Habitat Corridor that will stretch from Peaslee Crossing Road to Thornell Rd to Whittier Street and the Old Lower Road.

Motorized vehicles were illegally being used on the Peanut Trail. New signs were erected that state such vehicles are not allowed on the trail. However, there continued to be violations of this statute and the police were informed. One resident (who will remain nameless but is related to one of our Fire Department Medics) helped the Conservation Commission remove "very offensive graffiti" on the Peanut trail. She uses the trail often with her young children and was disappointed that someone would do such damage. The Pond Leveler on the Peanut Trail seems to be working well and is keeping the Beavers from building more Dams. This was installed by Bestway Wildlife and is checked throughout the year to make sure it is working correctly.

The Commission celebrated Earth Day by asking residents to clean up roadside trash in their neighborhoods. Trash bags were made available at the Town Hall and residents were encouraged to bring filled bags to the town transfer station for disposal. Once there, each resident was given a water bottle and a packet of seeds by a Conservation Commission member to thank them for their participation.

The Commission sponsored a public presentation by Unitil in April to provide information about their upcoming tree trimming by a licensed arborist on scenic roads in town. Residents were encouraged to bring their questions or concerns to the meeting. The scenic roads impacted in Newton included Gale Village, Bartlett Rd, Thornell and portions of Gould Hill Rd and Health Rd.

The winter storms brought down trees across the Trolley Trail and Fire Fighter Bob Heusser cut the downed trees to reopen the trail.

In May, it was brought to the attention of the Commission that someone was illegally moving the land surveyor's markers on the town property between Thornell Road and Peasley Crossing Road, on the Conservation Land known as the Guscora property. This property is monitored regularly by the Conservation Commission and the South-East Land Trust. The Commission hired a property surveyor Charles Zilch from S.E.C. & Associates, and the markers were reset. Any abutter that is interested in a copy of the Survey Plan, please email us at Conservation@newtonnh.net and we will send a copy to you. We would like to remind everyone that the moving of these markers is illegal. Commission members did a site walk multiple times during the year to ascertain if the markers had been disturbed and found them to be unmolested.

Much work was done on Busch Farm throughout the summer. All the Japanese Knotweed, and invasive cane (that destroys native plants and spreads rapidly), was removed from the parking lot. This is a five-year project as the lengthy roots (up to 25 feet long) will reproduce if even a small piece is left in the ground. Yearly eradication will be required to keep this plant at bay.

The large meadow on the Busch property was mowed by KMA Tree Service in Newton. They were able to cut down and remove the numerous invasive Autumn Olive trees throughout the

area. In addition, this company cut back overhanging trees that were impeding the trails. Multiple site walks by Commission members were conducted in though out the year to inspect the progress of tree removal and trimming. The job is more than half done and is projected to be completed in the spring.

The final issues for the property are to repair a broken culvert and begin to address the overabundance of another invasive plant, spurge, which is rampant throughout the meadow as well as continued removal of Oriental bittersweet.

In November a public hearing was held on the proposed tree cutting at 17 Thornell Rd. The owner stated that only two trees would be removed, both located at the end of the driveway.

Throughout the year, the Commission responded to reports of illegal filling of wetlands and each report was followed up with a site walk by several Commission members. The owners were advised of the state regulations about wetlands and their management. Properties on Merrimac Road, Country Pond Road, Wenmarks Road, Crystal Lane, Whittier Street, Pond Street and North Main Street, were all inspected during the year. In addition to these inspections members of the Conservation Commission attended multiple meetings for the Newton Planning Board, Newton Zoning Board in order to give input on various plans that the boards were discussing. The Commission also worked closely with the Code Enforcement Officer/Building Inspector Sam Zannini regarding wetlands & setbacks.

We look forward to continued improvement of the Busch Farm property in 2024 along with more education of the public on the preservation of wetlands and forested areas in the town.

There are many people we would like to thank for helping us throughout the year: Fire Chief John Alcainho, Former Polce Chief Mike Jewett, Road Agent Mike Pivero, Highway Foreman Ron Jackson, Fire Fighter Bob Heusser, Fire House Captain Bob Zalenski, Bill Slombo and House of Representative Charles Melvin.

Respectfully submitted by Loren Melvin & Trisha McCarthy

Conservation Members are:

Sandra Estabrook/Chairperson, Nancy Slombo/Vice Chairperson, Lorene Melvin, Rob Hallock, Trisha McCarthy/Secretary and Ex-Officio Selectman Joe Simone