



2008

Scituate Conservation Commission Annual Report

March 2009

*"WORKING TO CONSERVE
SCITUATE'S NATURAL &
COMMUNITY
RESOURCES"*

The Scituate Conservation Commission exists to help the community and its citizens sustain their environment and quality of life while meeting their economic needs.

We are a non-regulatory, town organization dedicated to:

- Identifying and conserving Scituate's important natural resources;
- Improving the knowledge base from which land use and natural resource decisions are made;
- Building local capacity to protect and manage natural resources as our town grows;
- Conserving our town's unique community character;
- Continuing the Town's legacy as the steward of the state's primary drinking water supply—the Scituate Reservoir.

For More Information

Contact:

Scituate

Conservation

Commission

P.O. Box 328

North Scituate, RI 02857

Gloria Loyd, Town Hall
647-2822

Scituate High School Environmental Science Students Monitor Scituate Sites



Students in Scituate High School's new Environmental Science class have begun long-term environmental monitoring projects that involve several sites overseen by the Conservation Commission. Sites include Chopmist Center, Westconnaug Meadows, and Lawton Farm. Students have surveyed the sites looking for invasive species and have found significant invasions of multiflora rose, barberry, and oriental bittersweet at Lawton Farm. Chopmist Center had occurrences of several invasives but in lower numbers, making implementation of control measures easier than at the Lawton Farm site. Westconnaug Meadows appears to be in good shape though monitoring should continue given the presence of large infestations of knottweed nearby. This spring, students will continue their field work as they conduct soil and water testing at their sites. Students plan to present their data at the 2nd Annual Nature of Discovery Symposium at Brown University in May.

Photos: Top: Cody Diggle and Kyle Pheland monitor invasive species at Westconnaug Meadows. Middle: Marina Capraro, Dana Albanese, and Leah Staniorski document an occurrence of bittersweet at Lawton Farm. Lower: Leah Staniorski and Dana Albanese document an occurrence of rosa multiflora at Lawton Farm.

Property Steward Program Successful First Year

Property stewards are the "extra eyes and ears" the Conservation Commission needs to help monitor the everyday happenings at the Lawton Farm and Westconnaug Meadows. Stewards walk the properties on a monthly basis and send reports to the Commission regarding the condition of the areas. Our thanks to the current stewards: Robert Fain, Tony and Jackie Marro, Scott Jablonski, John McEvoy, Bob and Carol Janus.

Anyone interested in becoming a property steward please call Ruth Strach, 934-2277

Providence Water Supply Board and the Town of Scituate resolve issues of watershed land valuation

The Conservation Commission supports the tentative agreement with the PWSB as one of the ways by which Scituate's land conservation goals could be fulfilled. Approved by the Town, the agreement is awaiting final approval by the Providence Water Board.

Alice M. Howland 2008 Conservation Award— Paul Dolan—

Chair Thomas Angell presented the 2008 Alice M. Howland Conservation Award to Paul Dolan for more than 10 years of enthusiastic and devoted service with the Conservation Commission and Land Trust. “Mr. Arbor Day,” and forrester, Paul continues to coordinate the Arbor Day activities and has a unique style as volunteer leader, heading walks and teaching about trees. The Alice M. Howland Conservation Award recognizes an individual, group organization rendering outstanding service, either recently or over a period of years, to natural resource conservation in the Town of Scituate. The award is dedicated in the memory of Alice M. Howland, formerly of Hope, one of Scituate’s conservation pioneers. Previous recipients include Mr. Alvah Vernava (2003), Mr. Alfred Hawkes (2004), Mr. James Doris (2005), Ms. Diana Reisman (2006) and Mr. Chris Modisette (2007).



Tom Angell (right) presents photo by Sal Mancini to Paul Dolan (left) for the 2008 Award

Open Space Saves Tax Dollars

(courtesy of Janet Coit, Director, The Nature Conservancy)

“In Rhode Island communities where this has been carefully studied, for each dollar of tax revenue a new home brings to a town, the cost to the community in schools, police, fire, public works and other services ranges from \$1.05 to \$1.46. Who pays the difference in revenue to expenses? You and I. On the other hand, open space and working lands cost only 31 cents to 46 cents for every dollar of revenue they generate. Do the math—protecting open space and working lands makes solid economic sense for all of us. Once a piece of open space is developed into residential housing, the town is faced with increased costs that outpace the added taxes from the new housing. Farms, forests and other open spaces are good for Rhode Islanders. Rhody Fresh milk, the wine from our East Bay vineyards, fresh fruits and vegetables at the farmers markets, clean water, forest and wood products, or the nursery plants in your yard, all come from our working lands. Currently, 28 of Rhode Island’s 36 school districts buy locally raised or grown products. This works perfectly with the state’s initiative to make school meals and snacks healthier and more nutritional for our children. Local agriculture is a growing sector of our economy, and conserving these productive lands is good for our food security and our health. Residents understand that the forests, fields, and wetlands that recharge public aquifers and reservoirs are necessary for clean drinking water, and that the state’s rivers, marshes and coastal ponds support our fisheries. People know that these lands and waters will not continue to support the state’s economy and enhance our quality of life without efforts devoted to protecting them for the future.”

Arbor Day, May 2008

2008 was the 22nd year that Arbor Day celebrations were held at the Hope, North Scituate, and Clayville Elementary Schools and the High School. This year, 4 trees were planted, one at each school. During the past 22 years more than 5,000 school children have attended Arbor Day celebrations and planted 110 trees to commemorate the importance of trees in the environment. Many thanks to Hope Associates, the Gentian Garden Club, the Rhode Island Tree Council, the Scituate School Department and the teachers and staff at the various schools for their assistance.



Paul Dolan and the children prepare to plant a tree

Paul Dolan, and school children take turns at the shovel



Planted! . . . Someday this tree is going to be really big...I’ll be big too.

Tours, Workshops & Celebrations in 2008

During the course of the year the Commission sponsored or co-sponsored a number of tours and/or workshops for residents of the town. Some of these included:

- Annual Meeting, March 2008
- Westconnaug Meadows, Vernal Pool Walk , April 2008
- Arbor Day Celebrations, May 2008
- Knights Farm Walk, May 2008
- Solstice Paddle, June 2008
- Lawton Farm Walk, November 2008



Vernal pool salamander egg masses, Westconnaug



Brian Knight leads walkers at the barn at Knight's Farm



Group gathers behind new sign at Westconnaug Meadows after vernal pool walk



Picnic at Hope Beach after the Solstice Paddle



Kate Giorgi of NRCS explains about invasive plants at Lawton Farm



Chris Modisette talks about tree identification, Lawton Farm



Group discusses alternatives to the stones placed in the stream at Lawton Farm by visitors wanting easier crossing. This dam of stones was subsequently removed and a way to aid pedestrian crossing that will meet DEM wetlands management criteria, is being sought.

Stones Updates

Highlighting the aesthetics of stonework and the ancient, apparently simple techniques of hand-etched, hand-carved headstones, Karin Sprague, Scituate stonecarver, spoke at the March 2008 Annual Meeting of the Conservation Commission. She shared with us her abiding love of her work, the sacred space of it, and her sense of a growing national and international appreciation for products carved in stone with hammer and chisel by skilled artisans.

The Conservation Commission is interested in the preservation of historic carved stone markers and headstones. We are also particularly interested in the preservation of Scituate's drystone walls, so much a part of our collective cultural and historic heritage and characteristic of the rural New England landscape.



Tools of the trade (from Karin's website)



Karin Sprague admires stone wall at Knight's Farm



A stone wall in winter

Scituate Conservation Commission

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Ruth Strach 401.934-2277



“WORKING TO CONSERVE SCITUATE’S NATURAL RESOURCES”

Mission Statement

To promote and develop natural resources, to protect watershed resources, and to preserve natural aesthetic areas within the town.

Current Members

Thomas Angell, Chair

Ruth Strach, Vice-Chair

Sara Adams

Michael Capirchio

Cheryl Dexter

Cynthia Gianfrancesco

John Vernava

Gloria Loyd, Clerical Assistant

We're on the Web!

www.scituateri.org

Join us on our outings in 2009!