



# Scituate Conservation Commission Annual Report

March 2010

*"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

## *Lawton Farm Management Plan Updated in 2009*

### PROPERTY MANAGEMENT PLAN

Prepared for:

LAWTON FARM  
Scituate Conservation Commission  
Scituate, Rhode Island



PREPARED BY:  
MARC J. TREMBLAY, CF  
LAND MANAGEMENT SERVICES  
303 COURTHOUSE LANE, PASCOAG, RI 02859  
(401) 568-3410

The Conservation Commission is pleased to present to the public this year, the updated Property Management Plan for the Lawton Farm. The plan was ably prepared by Marc Tremblay of Land Management Services, and incorporates concerns raised by the members in more than two years of deliberations at the monthly meetings of the Commission.

The Lawton Property Plan may be viewed at the Town Clerk's office in the Town Hall in North Scituate village or downloaded from:

[www.scituatericonservation.org](http://www.scituatericonservation.org)

This plan differs from the previous version in welcoming people to walk the property during the nesting season if they stay on the mowed path at the perimeters of the hayfield. We also hope to secure public understanding and cooperation in not bringing dogs onto the property at all between April 1 and August 31, to ensure the nesting success of the

Eastern Meadowlark and Bobolink. The populations of these birds are in marked decline in New England, and it is our collective job to manage this property to give these birds optimal habitat.

## *Property Steward Program in Second 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. Since some of our stewards cannot visit the sites as often as they had once hoped, we are in need of additional stewards.

**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 agreement with the PWSB as one of the ways by which Scituate's land conservation goals could be fulfilled. The agreement was approved by the Town and received final approval from the Providence Water Board in 2009. Jon Vernava, from the Scituate Conservation Commission and Scituate Land Trust, and Leo Thompson from the Scituate Land Trust now serve on the committee to help the PWSB identify properties that relate directly to the watershed and are in other ways suitable for acquisition.

## *Alice M. Howland 2009 Conservation Award*

Chair Thomas Angell presented the 2009 Alice M. Howland Conservation Award to Hope Associates for their past and ongoing conservation work in the village of Hope and in the spirit of Alice Howland. The Alice M. Howland Conservation Award recognizes an individual, group or 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), Mr. Chris Modisette (2007) and Mr. Paul Dolan (2008).



## *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 2009*

This was the 23<sup>rd</sup> year that Arbor Day celebrations were held at the North Scituate, Hope, and Clayville elementary schools and the Scituate High School. Four trees were planted this year, one at each school. During the past 23 years, more than 5,500 school children have attended Arbor Day celebrations; 114 trees have been planted 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 with this year's events. Special thanks go to Paul Dolan and Chris Modisette for their dedication and support for Arbor Day at the schools and for ongoing mulching and forestry instruction at the High School.



***Tours, Workshops & Celebrations in 2009***

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 2009
- Walking Tour of the Joslin Farm , sponsored by Providence Water, Scituate Conservation Commission, RI Forest Conservator’s Organization, Northern Conservation District, Southern New England Forest Consortium and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service on 25 April 2009
- Arbor Day Celebrations, May 2009
- Solstice Paddle, 20 June 2009 (cancelled by bad weather)
- In Town, Old Main Street Walk, 11 December 2009



**Grassland bird habitat drives stump removal and field restoration at Joslin Farm; Kate Giorgi from NRCS explains**



**A good crowd gathers to learn more of the history of the Joslin Farm and how the property is being managed today.**



**Marc Tremblay and Hans Bergey help attendees learn about the forest growth.**



**Existing grasslands at Joslin Farm are being expanded to more than 50 acres to encourage grassland bird species.**



**Bill Tabor explains his sugar maple sap collection process; the 40-person audience is most attentive, and hopes to come back in the Spring when it isn't 10° F!**



**Rich Blodgett of Providence Water gives all present a guided tour of what used to be on this land; Jon Vernava and Tom Angell hold one of the posters showing the mill and houses once in this place. Hans Bergey, later talks about the tree succession.**



**A portion of the group about to walk south on the old road to the mill, a 'way' that now goes to the water. Stone retaining walls run parallel to the southwest edge of the old road.**

## **THE MILL VILLAGE: INDUSTRY, TRANS-FORMATION & POWER**

From the late 1700s to the end of the 1800s, Rhode Island rivers provided power for industry. By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, dams were built on every stream in Rhode Island. Steam power didn't replace water power; it augmented that power and allowed factories to expand.

At the March 2009 Annual Meeting, Richard Greenwood explained the relationship between the decline of the local mills and the linking of their mill ponds in the creation of the Scituate Reservoir which, by 1915, replaced the existing polluted water source for the City of Providence. The pond that had supplied water to Providence was located near the Sockonasset area. Water was pumped from there into the city via pipes under what is now Reservoir Avenue in Cranston. Interestingly, the present Scituate Reservoir pumps water to that same early distribution point for transport into the city under Reservoir Ave.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many of the farms became suburbs. Dams and mills were abandoned.



**Rick Greenwood addresses the attendees at the Annual Meeting on the "Powerful Currents" that shaped Rhode Island industrial history.**

### **Scituate Conservation Commission**

P.O. Box 328  
North Scituate, RI 02857

Phone:  
Gloria Loyd, Town Hall  
401.647-2822 or  
Ruth Strach 401.934-2277



**We're on the Web!**

[www.scituatericonservation.org](http://www.scituatericonservation.org)

**Join us on our outings in 2010!**

**"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

Jon Vernava

Gloria Loyd, Clerical Assistant