



# 2012

# Scituate Conservation Commission Annual Report

March 2013

*"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 Activities in 2012*

A number of management activities this year at Lawton Farm were funded through NRCS grant monies and supervised by Mike Capirchio of the Scituate Conservation Commission with support from Cindy Gianfrancesco:

- June/July 2012 Bird surveys conducted at Lawton Farm courtesy of Bill Buffum and Rick McKinney from URI, Department of Natural Resources Science. Report can be seen on our web site at [www.scituatericonservation.org](http://www.scituatericonservation.org)
- August/September 2012 delayed mowing of fields to allow for ground-nesting birds including the Eastern Meadowlark and Bobolink. Fields 1-4 mowed (fields 1 and 2 baled) with funding from USDA, NRCS grant. Total grant from USDA, NRCS in 2012 was \$3,920.

## *Additional Lawton Farm, Westconnaug Meadows, and Tasca Field Management Activities*

The Conservation Commission installed in March 2012 an educational, Grassland Nesting Birds sign at Lawton Farm. The sign was designed to promote public knowledge of Eastern Meadowlark and Bobolink grassland habitat at Lawton Farm and to heighten public interest in the survival of these remarkable and endangered birds. In September 2012 a dog-waste-bag dispenser station was installed so that visitors with leashed dogs can more easily prevent further contamination of the property.



**Horse damage to riparian path**

We note that unleashed dogs are prohibited on ALL town properties, and that removal of dog waste is the responsibility of the dog owner. Horses are not allowed on the Lawton Farm property because they cause degradation to trails, especially trails in the riparian areas, and add nitrogen runoff to the stream. The Conservation Commission and Land Trust ask for continued public cooperation so all visitors can enjoy the Town properties in Scituate.

The Conservation Commission and Land Trust have been working with Town Solicitor David D'Agostino to clarify the Town Ordinances pertaining to the properties managed by the Conservation Commission. Property Management Plans are already in place for Lawton Farm and Westconnaug Meadows and will soon be completed for Tasca Field. Every effort is being made to ensure that the ordinances reflect the requirements of these Management Plans and, where applicable, the terms of the Conservation Easements or deed restrictions created when the properties were purchased. The Tasca Field Management Plan is a work in progress with the Youth Soccer Association and the Conservation Commission jointly. Chris Modisette will oversee the details of the new management plan for Tasca Field with turf management expert Brian Boesch of URI.

Thanks to more than \$27,000. of NRCS grants between 2006 and 2012, the Conservation Commission has been able to enhance the fields and woodland areas at Lawton Farm and has worked to eradicate invasive plants there and at Westconnaug Meadows. The NRCS grants have ended to municipal properties and we are working to identify other sources of funding.

### Alice M. Howland 2012 Conservation Award

Chair Thomas Angell presented the 2012 Alice M. Howland Conservation Award to Ted Richards for his work in securing the Knight Farm, Knowlton Farm, Tasca Field, Broad Oak Farm (Brighton), Hope Green and other Hope Associate work, and the Chopmist Senior Center. Ted was also involved in the resolution of the property dispute with the Providence Water Supply Board. His conservation work will benefit the citizens of Scituate now and in future time. Ted was quick to point out that he did not accomplish these things alone, and he extended thanks to Chris Modisette, John Gorham and Roger Adams particularly.

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), Mr. Paul Dolan (2008), Hope Associates (2009), Mr. Hans Bergey (2010), and Mr. Bob Budway (2011).



*Our Heartfelt thanks* go to Jon Vernava, who resigned in December, after many years of thoughtful analysis and meticulous attention to detail in service of the Conservation Commission and Land Trust.

### Arbor Day Celebrations, May 2012

This was the 26<sup>th</sup> year that Arbor Day celebrations were held in the Town. Trees were planted at North Scituate, Hope, and Clayville elementary schools, at the High School, and at the Chopmist Center. 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.



Chopmist Hill Center



Scituate Elementary School



Hope Elementary School

Clayville Elementary School



Scituate High School



In the past 26 years, more than 6,000 school children have attended Arbor Day

## ***Property Steward Program in Fifth Year***

People willing to function as “Property Stewards” by walking one of the properties (Lawton Farm or Westconnaug Meadows, especially) once a month and then emailing a paragraph to the Commission regarding the condition of the property, **please call Ruth Strach, 934-2277.**

## ***Providence Water Supply Board Public Field Tours***

Scituate Conservation Commission members have been pleased to attend a number of public field tours sponsored by the PWSB in Scituate Reservoir watershed areas. The PWSB sponsored a field tour on 24 March 2012 near the Gainer Dam at the foot of the Scituate Reservoir. Participants walked the paved access road leading below the largest dam in the state, and saw at close-hand the North Branch of the Pawtuxet River that now begins just below the dam and spillway overlook. The group drove together across the dam and went for a short hike to a local landmark known as Indian Rock, a huge and impressive boulder left when the last glacier retreated. There were actively managed forest stands and the group saw a small historic cemetery as well.



Photos of Indian Rock and the Gainer Dam Spillway courtesy of ProvWater.com

## ***Workshops and Celebrations in 2012 Sponsored or Co-sponsored by the Scituate Conservation Commission***

- 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, March 2012
- Arbor Day Ceremonies in May 2012 at the Scituate schools and Chopmist Center
- Brightman “Broad Oak” Tree Farm Woodland Walk with Chris Modisette and Paul Dolan on September 8 from 8:30 to 10:30 AM. The forest has been managed to improve its health, produce timber, Christmas Trees and fuel wood, and to protect the Scituate Reservoir. In 2002 the Town of Scituate purchased a conservation easement on the property. The walk was sponsored by the Scituate Land Trust, Scituate Conservation Commission and the Brightman Family Foundation.



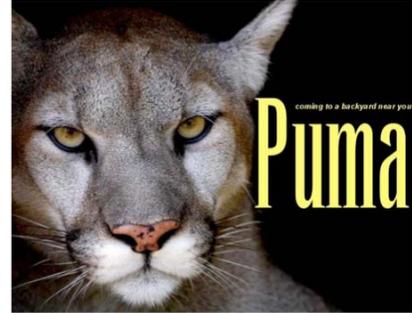
## ***Open Space Saves Tax Dollars***

(courtesy of Janet Coit, former Director, The Nature Conservancy, and current Director of the RI Department of Environmental Management)

“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.”

### Conservation Commission Annual Meeting March 2012

The presentation by Bill Betty of Richmond on the resurgence of mountain lions in New England was well attended at the 2012 Conservation Commission Annual Meeting. Scattered evidence is mounting through documented road kills, sightings, scat, tracks, 4'-8' tree scrapes, 3" foot prints, and cached mountain lion prey, in several New England states, that mountain lions are making a comeback. More than 200 sightings have been reported in Pomfret, CT. As Bill says, "coming to a backyard near you." Melanie Culver geneticist, says that the evidence maps point to mostly one species with a long dispersal and a constant exchange of DNA.



Hands are raised when Bill Betty asks how many in the audience have seen a mountain lion.

Puma photo courtesy of Bill Betty of Richmond

### Providence Water Supply Board

Rich Blodgett from the PWSB spoke to the Scituate Conservation Commission Annual Meeting attendees in March 2012 about the Board's ongoing successes and plans in purchasing land and development rights for watershed area protection. Both Leo Thompson, of the Scituate Land Trust, and Jon Vernava, of the Scituate Conservation Commission and Scituate Land Trust contributed in 2011 to the PWSB deliberations and assisted in the selection of properties in the Scituate Reservoir watershed area for possible purchase or development-rights purchase. Jon Vernava continued this service in 2012.

### Scituate Conservation Commission and Scituate Land Trust

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North Scituate, RI 02857

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We're on the Web!

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

Join us on our outings in 2013!

### "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.

#### Conservation Commission

- Thomas Angell, Chair
- Ruth Strach, Vice-Chair
- Sara Adams
- Michael Capirchio
- Donald Gainey
- Cynthia Gianfrancesco
- Jon Vernava (until December 2012)
- Gloria Loyd, Clerical Assistant

#### Land Trust

- Thomas Angell, Chair
- Ruth Strach, Vice-Chair
- Sara Adams
- David Ellingwood
- Fran Gordon
- Walter Powell
- Jon Vernava (until December 2012)
- Gloria Loyd, Clerical Assistant