



# Scituate Conservation Commission and Scituate Land Trust 2013 Annual Report

March 2014

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

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

We are non-regulatory, town organizations 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  
and Scituate Land Trust  
P.O. Box 328

North Scituate, RI 02857  
Marisa Mouradjian, Town  
Hall  
647-2822

## ***Property Management Activities in 2013***

Several management activities this year were supervised by members of the Conservation Commission and/or Land Trust, at Lawton Farm, Westconnaug Meadows, and Tasca Field. The Conservation Commission and Land Trust have continued working with Town Solicitor David D'Agostino to clarify the Town Ordinances pertaining to the properties managed by the Conservation Commission or Land Trust for the Town. Property Management Plans are in place for Lawton Farm and Westconnaug Meadows and will be completed in 2014 for Tasca Field. Every effort is being made to ensure that the Town ordinances reflect the requirements of the Management Plans and, where applicable, the terms of the Conservation Easements or deed restrictions created when the properties were purchased. Memoranda of Understanding are under consideration for groups using Town properties and contributing substantively to the maintenance of those properties.

### ***Lawton Farm***

- June 2013 bird surveys were conducted at Lawton Farm courtesy of Bill Buffum, Rick McKinney and Daphne Payne from URI, Department of Natural Resources Science. The 2013 Bird Survey Report is available at [www.scituatericonservation.org](http://www.scituatericonservation.org) from the "Publications" section.
- September/October 2013 delayed mowing of fields to allow for ground-nesting birds including the Eastern Meadowlark and Bobolink. Fields 1-3 mowed (fields 1 and 2 baled) at no charge, in exchange for the hay. Field 4 was left uncut as per the management plan. The quality of the hay in some edge areas was not usable because the hay was so contaminated by dog feces. The Conservation Commission, Land Trust, and Town officials are considering ways to solve this problem.
- In March and in July 2013 some invasive plant species removal and follow up treatments were done to eradicate unwanted plants that outcompete more desirable native plants.

Mowing at  
Lawton Farm, late  
fall after grassland  
bird nesting  
season



### ***Westconnaug Meadows***

Invasives work continued by Dave Renzi. Ted Hopkins cleaned up storm-felled trees and the trail was changed to conform with the Providence Water Supply Board boundary. The PWSB has installed new signs along that border. Fran Gordon has filed regular reports this year as a steward of Westconnaug Meadows and has kept the Commission and Land Trust up-to-date on needed improvements and the general state of the trails. Thanks Fran!

### ***Tasca Field***

The Tasca Field Management Plan is a work in progress with the Youth Soccer Association and the Conservation Commission jointly. Chris Modisette has nearly completed the new management plan for Tasca Field. Turf management expert Brian Boesch of URI has made the recommendations for the grass at the field, and the YSA has made available records of turf management done to date. Ruth Strach is coordinating efforts to put a new comprehensive management plan in place.

### **Alice M. Howland 2013 Conservation Award**

Chair Thomas Angell presented the 2013 Alice M. Howland Conservation Award to John Gorham, Esq. for his many years of conservation-focused service and dedication to the Town of Scituate.

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), Mr. Bob Budway (2011), and Mr. Ted Richard (2012).



Tom Angell presents the 2013 Alice Howland Award to John Gorham

### **Alice Howland Conservation Award Plaque now in the Town Council Chamber**

A new perpetual tree plaque commemorating all of the recipients of the Alice Howland Award now hangs in the Town Council Chambers. Each year a new recipient's name, engraved on a metal leaf, will be added to the tree. Past honorees John Gorham, Paul Dolan, Al Vernava, and Hans Bergey attended the presentation.



### **Arbor Day Celebrations, May 2013**



Paul Dolan, Tom Angell and students from N. Scituate Elementary School plant new tree in front of the Town Hall—start to finish

This was the 27<sup>th</sup> year that Arbor Day celebrations were held in the Town. Trees were planted at Hope and Clayville elementary schools, at the High School, and at the Town Hall (courtesy of the North Scituate Elementary School) this year. 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. In the past 27 years, more than 6,300 school children have attended Arbor Day events and 130 trees have been planted to honor the importance of trees in our environment.

## **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 18 May 2013 walk at Joslin Farm on the west side of the Scituate Reservoir, for example. Thanks go to Christopher Riely, PWSB Forest Supervisor for keeping us posted!

## **Workshops and Celebrations in 2013 Sponsored or Co-sponsored by the Scituate Conservation Commission**

- 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, March 2013
- Arbor Day Ceremonies in May 2013 at the Scituate schools and Town Hall
- Lawton Farm Evening Walk, August 2013 as part of “Land Trust Days” in August and September



Cindy Gianfrancesco and Mike Capirchio informed attendees about our ongoing work at Lawton Farm. Along the way, invasive plants were identified and several birds were identified by sight and/or by sound.

## **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 2013

Mark and Marcia Wilson brought their “Eyes on Owls” program to us at the 2013 Annual Meeting. The live “ambassador” owls, born in captivity or too injured in road accidents to release again into the wild, travel in hand-crafted owl boxes, and astonish viewers with their power, beauty, wing-span, resounding hoots and, yes, even pellets. Look for owl “whitewash” on trees in the woods to locate favorite owl perches. Screech, Barred, Great-horned and Barn owls are native to our area, and Snowy owls have been seen frequently in RI this winter.



Screech Owls come in two colors: red and grey



The Barred Owl in our woods says, “Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you—all?”



Marcia Wilson with Eagle Owl (a U.K. cousin to our Great Horned Owl)

### Conservation Commission Gift to Scituate and Hope Libraries

Mark and Marcia Wilson gifted the Commission and Land Trust with two splendid Snowy Owl prints that were afterward framed by the Commission and given to the North Scituate and Hope libraries. You can see them there!

### Property Steward Program in Sixth Year

People willing to function as “Property Stewards” by walking one of the properties (we are looking for stewards for Lawton Farm especially) once a month and then emailing a paragraph to the Commission regarding the condition of the property, **please email Sue Scanlon at: [suescanlon@yahoo.com](mailto:suescanlon@yahoo.com).**

## Scituate Conservation Commission and Scituate Land Trust

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We're on the Web!

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

Join us on our outings in 2014!

### “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
- Cynthia Gianfrancesco, Vice-Chair
- Sara Adams
- Michael Capirchio
- Donald Gainey
- Sue Scanlon
- Ruth Strach
- Marisa Mouradjian, Clerical Assistant

#### Land Trust

- Thomas Angell, Chair
- Mike Capirchio, Vice-Chair
- Sara Adams
- David Ellingwood
- Fran Gordon
- Walter Powell
- Sue Scanlon (began 9 January 2014)
- Ruth Strach (until 1 January 2014)
- Marisa Mouradjian, Clerical Assistant