



# Scituate Conservation Commission and Scituate Land Trust 2014 Annual Report

March 2015

**"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  
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## Property Management Activities in 2014

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 already in place for Lawton Farm and Westconnaug Meadows and will be completed in 2015 for Tasca Field. Every effort is being made to ensure that the town 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. Memoranda of Understanding are under consideration for regular users of the Town properties making substantial contributions to maintaining the properties. Work with Dave Renzi on invasives management continues on all the properties.



## New Walking Trail Maps Now Available

Descriptive flyers containing trail maps, distances, and points of interest have been created by Fran Gordon and Sue Scanlon and are now available at the N. Scituate Library and online to guide people walking the trails at Westconnaug Meadows and Lawton Farm.

**Lawton Farm** The 2014 Bird survey was conducted at Lawton Farm by Chelsea Glinka and Rick McKinney from URI, Department of Natural Resources Science. The report can be seen on our web site at [www.scituatericonservation.org](http://www.scituatericonservation.org)

The 2014 delayed mowing of fields allowed for ground-nesting birds including the Eastern Meadowlark and Bobolink to thrive. We are currently working with NRCS to improve grass quality by increasing soil nutrients to improve grass cover and allow a more desirable 2 cuts per year system, timed not to affect the grassland birds nesting. Thanks to some hard work by several members of the team, including Don Gainey and Mike Capirchio, in 2014 the Commission was awarded a DEM grant of \$46,000. for design, wetlands permitting, and construction of a footbridge over Cranberry Brook at the lower crossing and a needed culvert repair at the upper stream crossing at Lawton Farm.



**Westconnaug Meadows** Invasives work continued with Dave Renzi. Fran Gordon has filed regular reports 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** Work continues on the management plan in coordination with the Scituate Youth Soccer Association, Ruth Strach, Sue Scanlon, Chris Modisette, and Brian Boesch, URI turf expert.

**Alice M. Howland 2014 Conservation Award**

Chair Thomas Angell presented the 2014 Alice M. Howland Conservation Award to Jon Vernava a member of the Scituate Conservation Commission and the Land Trust for many years who recently resigned to spend more time with his family. Jon's work with the Providence Water Supply Board to both identify lands to be conserved and negotiate with land owners was a major part of the town's tax settlement agreement with PWSB several years ago. His efforts helped protect large parcels of land in Scituate from development.

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), Mr. Ted Richard (2012), John Gorham Esq. 2013.



Tom Angell presents the 2014 Alice Howland Award to Jon Vernava

**We Applaud Councilwoman Brenda Frederickson for Recycling Initiatives that Benefit the Town, the Citizens and the Environment**

The new 64-gallon green recycling bins were delivered in 2014 to every residence in Scituate. Town residents are expected to ramp up their recycling efforts thereby increasing the money the Town earns for the tonnage recycled and, at the same time, to reduce the trash tonnage sent to the landfill and thereby avoid the penalties that result from exceeding the cap.

**Arbor Day Celebrations, May 2014**

This was the first year in 28 that Arbor Day celebrations were not held in the Town, partly because there is no room for more trees at the traditional locations. For 27 years, trees were planted at North Scituate, Hope, and Clayville elementary schools, at the High School, and at the Chopmist Center.

Many thanks to all Arbor Day supporters: Hope Associates, 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 Arbor Day events and for their many years of support. 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. Thanks also go to Tom Angell for his frequent participation and constant support. In the past 27 years, more than 6,000 school children have attended Arbor Day events and more than 130 trees have been planted to honor the importance of trees in the environment.



Typical locations in past years for tree planting on Arbor Day: three elementary schools, the high school, and the Chopmist Center. Last year the Town Hall got a tree.

## **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. On Saturday, September 6, 2014 at the Scituate Reservoir Watershed, the Providence Water hosted a free public field tour to explore the dam at the base of the Westconnaug Reservoir, a tributary of the main reservoir known for its scenic views and excellent water quality.



*Westconnaug Reservoir photo courtesy of PWSB*

## **Workshops and Celebrations in 2014 Sponsored or Co-sponsored by the Scituate Conservation Commission and Scituate Land Trust**

- 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, March 2014
- Lawton Farm Walk for the members of the Scituate Town Council –Dave D’Agostino, Brenda Fredrickson, and John Winfield joined members of the Conservation Commission and the Land Trust on this walk.
- Scituate Land Trust and Hope Associates hosted the Doctor’s Lane walk on the Trott/Perry Land Preserve located along the eastern banks of the Pawtuxet River in the northern end of Hope Village. Since 2005 the land has been managed under a Forest Stewardship Plan adopted by the Hope Associates. September 20<sup>th</sup> 9: - 11: AM
- Westconnaug Meadows Amphibian Walk, April 5, 2014. Mike Capirchio led the tour exploring the vernal pools of Westconnaug Meadows with special attention to salamanders and their egg masses.



*Pictures Left to Right: (1) Fran Gordon, Mike Capirchio, Madison Scanlon and Sue Scanlon (2) Walter Powell, Dave Ellingwood and Tom Angell (M)*



*On the Amphibian Walk at Westconnaug Meadows, Mike is about to exhibit a yellow spotted salamander resting on oak leaves.*

## **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 2014

The 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Scituate Conservation Commission was held on March 11. Commission Chairperson Thomas Angell welcomed about 40 people. "Don't Treat Your Soil Like Dirt" was presented by Kate Sayles of the Northern RI Conservation District and Matt Tracy, local farmer and compost expert. They treated the audience to a lively "compost cooking show" aimed at teaching the basics of creating a great compost pile. Three parts brown compost and to one part green compost to begin. Temperature is important. Great compost is the perfect way to



Left to Right: Kate Sayles and Matt Tracy demonstrate a small composting bin (L), the prime ingredients going into the compost are demonstrated (M), a close-up shot of examples of dry "brown" compost as distinct from fresh "green" compost (R).

## Property Steward Program in Seventh 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 call Sue Scanlon at [suescanlon@yahoo.com](mailto:suescanlon@yahoo.com).

## Kudos to the Paddlers

Chuck Horbert, of N. Scituate, Jim Cole of Charlestown, Dave Smith of Westerly, and Bill Luther of Seekonk, MA, paddled and portaged for a week from North Smithfield to Westerly in July 2014 traveling through 18 cities and towns. Their trip raises new awareness of the need to conserve our beautiful Rhode Island waterways. See [www.facebook.com/paddleacrossrhodeisland](http://www.facebook.com/paddleacrossrhodeisland) for more information on the trip.

### 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 2015

## "WORKING TO CONSERVE SCITUATE'S NATURAL RESOURCES"

### Mission Statement

To promote and develop natural resources, too 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  
Michael Capirchio, Vice Chair  
Sara Adams  
David Ellingwood  
Fran Gordon  
Walter Powell  
Sue Scanlon

Marisa Mouradjian, Clerical Assistant