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# CONSERVATION COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2018

The Conservation Commission oversees the town's natural resources—wetlands, waterways, wildlife habitat, fields and forests—a multi-faceted, at times daunting, charge.

## LAND STEWARDSHIP

Considerable attention was focused on the Cheney Avenue/Old Street Road field—town conservation land—in response to a proposal for cattle grazing on the field and abutting forest edge. Consultation with the Forest Society and UNH Cooperative Extension helped the Commission prioritize improved stewardship of town conservation land.

The Commission contracted with Rick Van de Poll, Ecosystems Management Consultants, for Natural Resource Inventories on four town properties, the Cheney Avenue field and abutting Wheeler Trail forest included as one.

Goal is a management plan for each property based on its natural resources—forestry, agriculture, recreation, wildlife included, and threats to them.

As an aside, the Commission named the Cheney Avenue/Old Street Road field the Fernald Field in recognition of Dick Fernald's role in raising funds from neighbors and the wider community to conserve both the field and abutting forest three decades ago.

## LAND CONSERVATION

A more recent neighborhood initiative involves fundraising to purchase 100 acres of shoreline, forest, field and trails across from the town beach on Cunningham Pond. (When it comes to land conservation there is no doubt what a small group of thoughtful, committed neighbors can achieve—in this case Cunningham Pond neighbors.) As co-agents to expend the town's Land Acquisition Capital Reserve Fund, Commission members and the Select Board approved \$250,000 from the fund in support of the project. Fundraising is ongoing in 2019. (See the Open Space Committee report for more information.)

## ZONING CHANGE

The Commission comments to the state and town boards on project applications impacting the town's Wetlands Protection Overlay Zone and worked with the Planning Board to craft a code change to clarify certain uses allowed in the 50-foot wetland buffer, addressing an apparent loophole.

## THE YEAR AHEAD

Stewardship of town conservation land will remain a major focus. With the sunseting of the town's Water Resources Advisory Committee, the Commission has taken over that role and will be further defining the role.

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