

WOODSTOCK CONSERVATION COMMISSION 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

The Woodstock Conservation Commission (WCC) is comprised of local conservation volunteers who work to study and protect natural resources. Most efforts involve protecting wetlands and preserving open spaces. The WCC works with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) to provide local comments on wetland and other land disturbance permits.

The Commission holds regularly scheduled meetings Every 4th Tuesday at 4:00 PM at the Town Office Building starting Jan 17, 2023. The public is encouraged to attend.

Meeting minutes, agendas, and announcements are posted on the Town's website:
<https://www.woodstocknh.org/conservation-commission>

PERMITS, MITIGATION AND REPAIR PROJECTS

The WCC has received notifications from NHDES regarding Permit Applications and Wetlands Mitigation. They have also received notices of various federal and state highway repair projects. The WCC reviewed the permits and notices and had not comments to the State.

BARRY 4-H CONSERVATION CAMPS

This year, the WCC interviewed 14 students selected two Lin-Wood Middle School students to receive \$600 scholarships to attend a week of educational learning activities at the Barry Conservation Camp, located in Berlin, New Hampshire. There were 14 students that applied; the WCC conducted interviews at the school. We extend our thanks to Ms. Rebecca Steeves, 7th & 8th grade Science Teacher at the Lin-Wood Public School, for her assistance with this project.

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

The WCC manages conservation land easements granted to the Town. To retain these easements, the Town and the WCC must meet any restrictions listed in the property deeds.

The WCC received a notification from town residents regarding the unauthorized development of the Merriam Woods Conservation Easement. This development was done without the permission or knowledge of the town or the WCC. Climbing organizations and individuals had installed permanent climbing equipment including anchors, bolts, and signs on the town-owned conservation property. They used public websites to solicit funds, distribute maps and information on over 150 climbing routes, and encouraged the development of Merriam Woods as a major climbing destination. These actions resulted in a marked increase of the use of the property by climbers, prompting concerns regarding litter, parking issues, and altering trails.

The deed for Merriam Woods does allow for recreational use of the land but prohibits the installation of permanent structures of any kind. The WCC, through the Town Select Board, sent letters to the Rumney Climbing Association (RCA), the climbing website Mountainproject.com,

and other individuals in the climbing community, notifying them that they were in violation of the Use Limitations in the Warranty Deed of the property. In the letters, the town requested that all climbing equipment and signs be removed from the property and website information be adjusted to reflect the ownership of the property and restrictions.

Public meetings were held by the WCC with members of the town, the climbing community, and the RCA. The illegal signs were removed by climbers and the website was modified asking climbers to refrain from climbing in the area until the Town had worked through the citizens' concerns.

Several individual climbers volunteered their time for a day of clean up, removing all equipment except for fixed anchors, bolts, and tie offs. At the 2023 Woodstock Town Meeting the WCC has asked for input from the community on the removal of this equipment and the future of climbing at Merriam Woods.

The WCC has a goal to begin drafting a Management Plan for Merriam Woods and other Town-owned conservation lands by the 2023 Town Meeting. Once drafted, the Management Plans will be available for public review and comment.

Respectively Submitted,

Woodstock Conservation Commission
Kristen Durocher, Chairperson
Jim Chesebrough, Secretary

COMMISSION MEMBERS WANTED

The WCC is seeking individuals to fill a vacant seat on the Commission. Interested people should contact Kristen Durocher, chair kristen.durocher@gmail.com, Jim Chesebrough jchesebrough@keene.edu, secretary, or the Town Office at (603) 745-8752.