

## Report of the Conservation Commission

The Conservation Commission has the responsibility of protecting Wareham's valuable coastal and freshwater resource areas. The Commission regulates projects, which may have an impact on any wetland resource area. This year 85 public hearings were held (58 Notices of Intent and 27 Requests for Determination of Applicability) on a wide variety of projects. These projects ranged from small-scale home repairs to commercial construction. The Commission also investigated reported violations of illegal construction, pollution, and destruction of wetlands.

The Commission will continue to try to increase public awareness of the Wetlands Protection Act and the Wareham Wetland Protective By-Law and the important functions that wetlands serve. In a coastal community such as Wareham it is increasingly important for its residents to be aware of our fragile environment. There are pamphlets available at the Conservation Office, which explain the roles of Conservation Commissioners and the functions of the wetlands, which they protect.

New subdivisions, pier projects, single-family dwellings, and septic repair projects comprise the majority of new applications the Commission reviews. There were also sewer and water main extension projects that have been approved in several areas in town. Proposed infrastructure necessary to connect to the Town water treatment facility was approved for installation in the Oakdale & Tempest Knob areas over the course of this past year. Work has commenced on the sewer extension projects in the Parkwood Area, Linwood & Ladd Ave., and on Oak St. These projects will help to improve water quality in the Wareham River over the long term. In terms of larger scale commercial projects, the Wareham Crossing shopping mall was completed during this fiscal year. Road improvements in the area are also ongoing.

During this year the first phase of the Red Brook Habitat Restoration project was completed. The Trustees of Reservations, the organization that manages the Lyman Reservation, in conjunction with the MA Riverways Program, has completed the first of three phases of work designed to improve habitat for Brook Trout in Red Brook. The work involves the removal of manmade water control structures at several locations along the brook to try to recreate, as close as possible, the natural conditions of the original brook corridor. Habitat enhancement features created from natural materials were incorporated into the banks of the brook.

An article was submitted for the October Town Meeting which asked voters to consider the acceptance of an offer from John Decas to donate a piece of land to the Town for conservation purposes. The property is a 59,100 sq ft lot located at the corner of Narrows Road and Indian Neck Road, lot 1005, map 45. The lot contains a coastal salt pond which is tidally connected to the Wareham River/Harbor through a culvert under Narrows Road. This salt pond is ecologically important as it provides habitat for a variety of brackish water invertebrates and juvenile fish. Town Meeting voted to accept the land donation from Mr. Decas. The Conservation Commission would like to thank Mr. Decas for making this donation.

At the same Town Meeting, voters again decided to approve the purchase of a conservation restriction on a 20 acre parcel of land known as the Barker property located in the Great Neck area. The permanent protection of this property is part of a larger conservation effort aimed at protecting a large block of land in the Great Neck area. Through the approved conservation

restriction agreement the public will be afforded access to this land for passive recreational activities.

A second conservation restriction was approved by the Conservation Commission and the Board of Selectmen which will permanently protect 15.5 acres of coastal property in the Burgess Point Area. Mr. John Decas submitted a conservation restriction on a portion of his own property which abuts Onset Bay. This property contains coastal beach, salt marsh, and coastal dune as well as several pockets of freshwater wetlands. Though this property will not be open to the public, it will remain undeveloped as a result of the approved conservation restriction.

This year the Conservation Administrator, David Pichette, was designated as the Towns representative to the Buzzards Bay Action Committee(BBAC). He has since attended monthly meetings of the BBAC which involved discussions on a variety of important topics. These discussions have been informative and timely in terms of looking at issues that need to be addressed to improve and preserve the long term health of Buzzards Bay. Future grant opportunities were also discussed.

In May, the Conservation Commission adopted a fee schedule under the existing Wetland Protective By-Law to be applied to future projects subject to Conservation Commission review. These fees will be used to help offset the operating costs of the Conservation Office.

The gate to the Briarwood Conservation Area was closed to vehicular traffic due to the continued degradation of the wetland resource areas at this location. Because of the poor condition of the access road, vehicles were edging further and further off the formal traveled way into the adjacent salt marsh to avoid driving through large depressions in the road that hold significant volumes of water. The area has also been used as a boat ramp. Vehicles were driving over the beach and the salt marsh to access the water further contributed to the accelerated erosion of the resource areas. To prevent further degradation of this area, the intent is to close the area to vehicular traffic, with the exception of emergency response vehicles, other Town vehicles, and NSTAR maintenance vehicles, until the access road is repaired, and until measures can be put in place to prevent vehicles from driving onto resource areas. The property will continue to be open to anyone entering on foot.

Discussions were held with the Wareham Land Trust to discuss grant applications for land acquisitions. Specifically, a grant application was submitted under the Buzzards Bay NEP Mini Grant program to partially fund a Conservation Restriction on a parcel of land at the end of Columbia St., in the Swifts Beach area.

The Commission will continue to promote the importance of protecting open space. These resources serve as wildlife habitat and also provide natural areas for the public to enjoy. The Wareham Land Trust has also been very active increasing Wareham's protected open space. The Land Trust has been involved with ongoing negotiations in their effort to try to permanently protect tracts of land in the Great Neck Area. The Commission appreciates their continued efforts aimed at the permanent preservation of environmentally sensitive areas in town.

The Commission addressed a number of wetland violations this past year. Most notably, the

Commission worked with the owner of the County Road Recycling operation to restore wetlands that had been filled at this location.

A total of \$8676.88 has been collected this year by the Conservation Commission for Wetland Permit filing fees. The Commission also took in \$2000.00 collected in fines issued for violations of Wetland Laws.

The conservation office is staffed by a part-time secretary, Kelly Barrasso, who does an excellent job keeping the office running efficiently, and full-time Conservation Administrator, David D. Pichette. The Commission's seven regular and three associate members meet regularly at 7:00 P.M., the first and third Wednesday of every month.

Occasionally, additional special meetings are held due to a heavy case load or emergency situations.

Wareham Conservation Commission,  
Kenneth Baptiste, Chairman  
Douglas S. Westgate, Vice Chairman  
John Connolly  
Louis Caron Jr.  
Debbie Paiva  
Manny Barros  
Donald Rogers  
Sandy Slavin (Associate Member)