

**Hartland Conservation Commission
Celebration of 35 Years of Conservation
List Serve Posts**

January 14, 2024 – 35 Years of Conservation: The Beginning of the Conservation Commission

The Hartland Conservation Commission is celebrating its 35th anniversary in 2024. Wow!

The year was 1989. George H.W. Bush became the 41st President. The Exxon Valdez spilled 11 million gallons of crude oil into Alaska's Prince William Sound. Women's fashions trended toward big jackets in bright colors. Taylor Swift was born. At Town Meeting, the residents of Hartland voted to establish a Conservation Commission. Its purpose was "to inventory the Town's natural and cultural resources, to work to protect these resources, to increase awareness of conservation goals, and to cooperate with all levels of government and groups with similar concerns." Nine members were appointed by the Selectboard, and Geoff Dates was elected the first Chair. (Geoff Dates passed away just a few weeks ago.) Other inaugural members included Tim Rockwood (Vice Chair), Gloria Merritt (Clerk), Charles Marrin (Treasurer), Charles Day, Carol Stratton, Michael Weinberger, Dorothy Cummings, and Philip Nothnagle.

For 35 years, the Commission has been serving that purpose in all sorts of ways, with the help of many volunteers who have served as commissioners. This year, we want to recognize some of that progress and some of those people. Watch the listserv, our Facebook page

(<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064741808715>), or our page on the Town website for periodic posts detailing the work of the Commission. And as you walk around Hartland and notice the peaceful and natural beauty, join us to celebrate that dozens of our friends and neighbors over the past 35 years have been working behind the scenes to protect and preserve it!

January 22, 2024 35 Years of Conservation: The Conservation of Green Acres

After the formation of the Hartland Conservation Commission in 1989, one of the first major projects undertaken was to conserve Green Acres Farm. Then-owner Ruth Shumway wanted to protect the land from future development so that the agricultural land would remain agricultural, the woodland would remain woodland, and the wetland would remain wetland, forever.

Working with the Upper Valley Land Trust, the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB), the Department of Agriculture, and The Nature Conservancy, the Conservation Commission helped secure the conservation easement on 275 acres in

North Hartland. The VHCB provided a grant, but the Town needed \$15,000 in matching funds. The Conservation Commission raised \$10,000 in private donations, and Hartland voters approved another \$5,000 in taxes to complete the deal in 1990.

Conservation easements like this one are critical for protecting Hartland's rural character. Landowners retain ownership of their property, but restrictions are placed on future development, even if the owner sells the property in the future. There can be tax advantages for the landowner, as well. If you are considering conserving land and would like more information, please talk to a member of your Conservation Commission.

February 6, 2024 35 Years of Conservation: Current and Past Members

The work of the Conservation Commission, as with all the Town's commissions and committees, could not happen without legions of volunteers who donate their time and energy. Since its founding in 1989, more than four dozen volunteers have served on the Conservation Commission. Some have served only a short time, others for many years.

Below is a list of the Hartland residents who have served on the Conservation Commission. I believe it to be complete, but I apologize for any omissions. If you are on the list, we thank you. If you are interested in joining the Commission, watch for announcements of openings on the Hartland list serve or contact a current member of the Commission.

Sue Achenbach	Suzanne Enser	Ken McWilliams	Brett Simmons
Andrea Ambros	Sheilla Files	Cordie Merritt	Bill Stack
Rob Anderegg	Pierre Fournier	Gloria Merritt	Natalie Starr
Tina Barney	Dori Galton	Robyn Mosher	Andy Stewart
Trina Bech	Dean Greenberg	Will Moore	Carol Stratton
Amber Boland	Forrest Hammond	Heather Morse	Ned Swanberg
Greg Chase	Doug Hill	Philip Nothnagle	Jared Ulmer
Chris Collier	Knox Johnson	Zach Ralph	Mike Van Buren
Guy Crosby	Nancy Johnson	Tom Ramsey	Jennifer Waite
Dorothy Cummings	Deb Jones	Scott Richardson	Michael Weinberger
Geoff Dates	Deborah Luquer	Grace Anne Ridlon	Virginia White
Charles Day	Charles Marrin	Tim Rockwood	Sarah Wood
John Dumas	James May	David Sleeper	

March 17, 2024 35 Years of Conservation: Amphibian Rescue

Each spring, thousands of amphibians – frogs, toads, and salamanders – make their way from the wooded uplands where they overwinter to the ponds and streams where they mate and lay eggs. This migration starts with a bang on the first warm, rainy night of spring, so-called “Big Night”.

Unfortunately, many of these amphibians have to cross roads to get to their breeding grounds, and motorists who don’t see them in the dark run over hundreds of them. For several years, the Hartland Conservation Commission has organized volunteers to go out on Big Night and help the amphibians to get safely across roads. By counting how many frogs, toads, and salamanders are crossing, we have been able to identify a half-dozen “hot-spots”, areas where the migration is focused. By posting volunteers in these spots, we can save many of the amphibians that might otherwise become roadkill.

Our amphibian counts also go to a statewide database, where they are combined with counts from other towns to give scientists a more accurate picture of how many amphibians we have and where they are. This spring, watch the listserv for news of when Big Night is happening, and maybe come out yourself and help! (picture of Emma and salamander)

April 1, 2024 35 Years of Conservation: Streambank Restoration

April showers bring May flowers, and lots of streambank erosion! High, fast water resulting from spring runoff can cut into and and chew up a stream’s normal channel. The best preventative measure is streambanks with a wide buffer of vegetation. The roots of the trees and plants hold the soil and stabilize the bank until the water level goes down.

Over its 35-year history, the Hartland Conservation Commission has conducted several projects aimed at restoring vegetation along the banks of Lull’s Brook. In the 1990’s, with help from the local chapter of Trout Unlimited, trees and shrubs were planted along the brook near the library. Now many of those trees are mature and very tall, and the streambank there is well protected.

In 2019, the Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC) obtained a grant to restore vegetation further upstream on Lull’s Brook. Volunteers from CRC, Trout Unlimited, and the Conservation Commission planted over 400 native trees and shrubs. In November of 2023, another round of planting was made near the walking trail behind the Rec Center.

If your property includes stream banks, please consider expanding the vegetative buffer along them. The state recommends a 50-foot buffer. A couple of websites are listed

below that can help you pick out native trees and bushes that thrive in wet areas. Check before planting to make sure you don't accidentally introduce invasive species like Japanese knotweed. You could even plant some May flowers among the bushes!

Intervale Conservation Nursery: <https://www.intervale.org/nursery-ordering>
Champlain Valley Native Plant Restoration Nursery:
<https://www.pmnrcd.org/champlain-valley-native-plant-restoration-nursery/>

April 16, 2024 35 Years of Conservation: Management Plans for Public Lands

The Town of Hartland owns several large parcels of public land – the Summarsell Gateway Preserve, Sumner Falls, the Jenne Town Forest, and the 17-Acre Wood. Part of the Conservation Commission's work is to facilitate the protection and preservation of these lands. We do this through the use of management plans. These plans are approved by the Selectboard and describe what we will (or won't) do on the property. They try to preserve the natural habitats and wildlife, while providing recreation opportunities for Hartlanders.

The first such plan was for the Town Forest, and was a project by Antioch graduate student Scott Davison in 1996. Subsequent plans were prepared for the Summarsell Preserve (2001, updated in 2017) and Sumner Falls (2022).

Sometimes the plans are passive – just leave the land alone. We only mow the Summarsell Preserve to keep the open spaces open, but otherwise we don't do anything. Other plans call for more active management. At Sumner Falls, we want to put in some new hiking trails and manage invasive species. The 17-Acre Wood (behind the elementary school) provides outdoor classrooms and educational space, while keeping the environment as natural as possible. It will soon feature an ADA-accessible trail, so that anyone will be able to enjoy the setting. We are currently working with the Windsor County Forester to develop a management plan for the Jenne Town Forest.

Another benefit of these management plans is that they are reviewed periodically, so we need to take a close look at each parcel every few years to see what has changed and what now needs to be addressed. This might be a change in the land itself, or a change in what the Town needs and wants. We always welcome input from Hartland residents about the use of our public lands. Contact any member of the Conservation Commission to express your views.

May 21, 2024 35 Years of Conservation: Water Testing

The Hartland Conservation Commission began testing water quality in Lull's Brook in 2005. Initially, four sites in Three Corners and Four Corners were tested for E. coli, a type of bacteria found in human and animal waste that is often used as an indicator of water pollution. Beginning in 2006, phosphorus levels were also measured. Phosphorus enters water primarily as run-off from roads and areas that use commercial fertilizers.

Originally, the goal was to record the baseline level of water quality. Samples were tested in the spring and fall with the help of elementary school students and volunteers. Over time, the number of test sites was expanded, and different sites were sampled, including in the Connecticut River at Sumner Falls. Sampling is now done each month in the summer, when people might be swimming in the brooks. Water temperature is also recorded, as that is important for healthy fish habitat. We have now been monitoring water quality continuously for nearly 20 years. The record of results is available to anyone who is interested.

We have learned that overall, the levels of E. coli and phosphorus fall within the safe ranges set by the state. Levels go up for a few days after a heavy rain, but return to normal quickly. Water temperatures are sometimes a little higher than trout like, especially as climate change warms our summers.

Everyone can help keep our waters clean by maintaining their septic systems properly, using fertilizer sparingly (or not at all), and planting trees and shrubs along brooks and streams. These vegetative buffers help to trap run-off and keep it out of the water and serve to shade the water to keep water temperatures cooler. They also help to minimize erosion. For more information, contact any member of the Commission.

June 8, 2024 35 Years of Conservation: Hartland Conservation Awards



Conservation is a many-splendored thing – it can take the form of preserving land, protecting water, saving energy, educating the next generation of land stewards, and countless other activities that ultimately help to preserve or restore our natural world. In 2012, the Hartland Conservation Commission began celebrating people who had made a significant contribution to conservation with our Hartland Conservation Award. Micah Heaney was the first awardee for his Eagle Scout work building a loop trail through the 17-Acre Wood behind the elementary school. The next year, Mary Holland was recognized for her books on nature and her *Naturally Curious* blog. (Check it out at: <https://naturallycuriouswithmaryholland.wordpress.com/>)

Over the years, we have recognized more than a dozen Hartlanders who have made an impact on the town through their conservation efforts. Awards are usually presented at

the start of Town Meeting, although we took a break when COVID made in-person Town Meetings impossible. Awardees' names are also inscribed on a plaque at the back of Damon Hall. Check the list below to see our local conservation heroes; and, if you happen to see one of them in town, please congratulate them for their service,

Also, check out our logo, courtesy of Emma Petersson!

Date	Awardee	Description
2012	Micah Heaney	Construction of a trail through the 17-Acre Wood.
2013	Mary Holland	Books and newspaper columns informing the public of the wonders of nature.
2014	Natalie Starr	Many years of service on the Conservation Commission and in the community.
2015	Ginny White	Many years of service on the Conservation Commission and coordination of Green-Up Day.
2016	Dean and Susan Greenberg	Many years of service on the Conservation Commission, Hartland Nature Club, and as stewards of Eshqua Bog.
2017	Karl Kemnitzer	Many years of service on the Hartland Energy Committee and endless enthusiasm for energy conservation.
2018	Andrea and Theo Ambros, Gary Trachier - Hartland Winter Trails	Development and maintenance of Hartland Winter Trails.
2019	Amanda Hull and Lauren Skilling - Wednesday in the Woods	Development of a program to get kids learning outside as part of their school day.
2020	Cordie Merritt	Many years of service on the Hartland Conservation Commission and the Connecticut River Joint Commission.
2023	Stephen Leslie and Kerry Gawalt	Implementation and teaching of sustainable agricultural practices.
2023	Jennifer Waite	More than 30 years of service on the Hartland Conservation Commission, including playing a key role in the ADA-accessible trail for the 17-Acre Wood.
2024	Sarah Bruce	Many years of service on the Hartland Energy Committee and tireless dedication to WindowDressers projects for building insulating window inserts.

July 1, 2024 35 Years of Conservation: Guide to Hartland's Natural Areas

Upon moving to Hartland, new residents frequently ask, "Where can I go to get outdoors and explore?". To answer that question, the Hartland Conservation Commission developed a *Guide to Public Parks and Natural Areas*. Originally written in 2018 and updated twice since then, the Guide describes nine areas in Hartland where people can hike, swim, or just get out and enjoy nature. Sumner Falls, Eshqua Bog, the Summarsell Gateway Preserve, they're all here.

The Guide can be downloaded from the town website at:

<https://hartland.govoffice.com/index.asp?SEC=76581838-7C8A-439C-921C-16C3C9190E23>. Grab a picnic basket, binoculars, and your hiking boots and get outdoors!

July 15, 2024 35 Years of Conservation: Invasive Species Management



It sometimes feels like a losing battle against invasive species. Every year brings a new threat. When invasives move in, natural plant biodiversity is diminished and native insect and animal species decline. But even small successes can help. Over the years the Conservation Commission has led numerous efforts to increase awareness of what invasives are out there, and how to help to control them.

As far back as 2001, the Commission was walking along Lull's Brook, mapping purple loosestrife, invasive phragmites, and Japanese knotweed, and engaging the public in discussions on how invasives affect the brook. The next year, and in many subsequent years, work parties of commissioners and public volunteers went out to cut knotweed, honeysuckle, and other invasives near the library or on the Nature Conservancy's Hartland Rivershore Preserve (near Simon Pearce).

Our booth at Old Home Days regularly features information on, and often samples of, invasive plants and insects. On a walk around Foster's Meadow, one can find ten or more invasive species, so samples are easy to come by.

Invasive troubles are not limited to plants. When the emerald ash borer (EAB), an invasive beetle that kills ash trees, was first reported in Vermont in 2018, the Conservation Commission developed an EAB Response Plan, trying to understand and plan for the impact of tens of thousands of dead ash trees. For two years, commissioners hung and monitored purple EAB traps as an early warning of EAB infestation. Although the beetle has not been discovered in Hartland yet, it has been found in Hartford,

Windsor, Cornish and Plainfield, NH, Pomfret, and Woodstock. Sooner or later, we will find it here.

We can all help in the battle against invasive species. The Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation has a terrific website about invasives: <https://www.vtinvasives.org/>. Spend a little time learning about what invasive species might be near where you live, and how you might combat them. Spend 15 minutes pulling garlic mustard or uprooting barberry. Learn to recognize and watch out for hemlock woolly adelgid, jumping worms, or spotted lanternfly. An invasive species' worst nightmare is a motivated Hartland resident!

August 2, 2024 35 Years of Conservation: Appreciating Our Short-Term Volunteers



As I have said before, one of the purposes of the Conservation Commission is to protect and preserve Hartland's natural resources; but we get so much help from all of you! We want to give a huge shout-out to all our volunteer helpers.

Think about Green-Up Day. As many as 160 volunteers come out and clean up trash along our roadsides and ditches. No one is paid for it; not even our dedicated Green-Up Day coordinators. Everyone pitches in to remove TONS of trash. Three Corners Market kicks in free lunches for everyone.

Whenever the Conservation Commission has planted trees along Lull's Brook or removed invasives near the library, volunteers show up to help – Trout Unlimited, the Boy Scouts, the Connecticut River Conservancy, or just individuals who care. When we do a Source-to-Sea Cleanup at Sumner Falls or a bioblitz to inventory plants and animals, people come out and pitch in. If they're lucky, they might get a donut for their efforts. Others volunteer as stewards for Eshqua Bog, or maintaining Hartland Winter Trails.

Those are just the things we know about. I'm sure there are countless others who pull garlic mustard along their road or delay their haying until after the grassland birds have fledged. It's community in the very best sense. So, if you're flexible enough, pat yourself on the back. If you're not, ask someone else to pat you on the back. We appreciate what you do!

August 30, 2024 35 Years of Conservation: Inventorying Plants and Animals



“Don’t it always seem to go, that you don’t know what you got ’til it’s gone.” One of the purposes of the Conservation Commission is to protect Hartland’s natural resources. Obviously, that includes plants and animals. But we can’t protect what we don’t know about. For many years the Commission has worked to inventory what plants and animals make their homes in Hartland.

The first systematic effort to catalog the plants and animals in the Jenne Town Forest came in 1996, when Scott Davison, at the request of the Conservation Commission, made detailed lists of plants, animals, fungi, and birds. A more recent survey by County Forester Hannah Dallas (2023), allows us to compare vegetative changes in the intervening 27 years.

In 2011 and 2012, the Hartland Nature Club, including members of the Conservation Commission, made extensive lists of plants at Sumner Falls. Beginning in 2018, we’ve surveyed Hartland’s roads for ash trees in the right-of-way, so we would be able to assess the impact of emerald ash borer when it arrived, as it now has. Our annual amphibian migration surveys are reported to North Branch Nature Center and fed into a state-wide database of observations of amphibians. Likewise, any photos of mushrooms and fungi sent to iNaturalist are automatically recorded in the Fungal Diversity Survey, a continent-wide record of fungi.

Whenever we are conducting an inventorying project, we will put it on the listserv. Come and join us. You don’t need to be a trained biologist to help. There’s an app for that!

September 11, 2024 35 Years of Conservation: Conservation Trust Fund



Shortly after the formation of the Conservation Commission in 1989, a fund was created to facilitate land conservation activities in the town. Initially, \$10,000 was raised in private donations to help conserve Green Acres Farm in North

Hartland (1990). Since then, the Conservation Trust Fund (CTF) has assisted in conservation efforts on the Lemax farm (1996), the Jersey farm (1999), the Summarsell property (2001), the Lamb farm (2009), Garvin Hill (2016), the Howe farm (2018), and others.

Land conservation can be a complicated and expensive process. There are surveying and appraisal costs, legal fees, and other expenses, in addition to the cost of purchasing the development rights. Sometimes grants are available to help, but these often require a local match of funds. This is where the Conservation Trust Fund can help. With a small amount of money from the CTF, we can often leverage a larger amount of funding from a state or private foundation. We estimate that with the investment of about \$140,000 from the CTF, we have been able to facilitate the protection of over 1,100 acres of land!

Most of the money going into the CTF comes from private, tax-deductible contributions. Uses of the CTF are very specific. The funds must be used for “planning and preservation of the Town’s natural and cultural resources for the continuing benefit of the townspeople.” If you are considering a conservation project, please think of the CTF as a resource. We don’t have a lot of money, but we may be able to help unlock funds from other sources.

September 25, 2024 35 Years of Conservation: Jennifer Waite Reflections



Hi everyone! I’m Jennifer Waite, and I have the interesting title of the longest-serving member of the Hartland Conservation Commission – I joined in 1990 just a year after the Commission was created. At my first Hartland Town Meeting in 1989 I met Connie Tessier (a Hartland legend), and she told me that to truly be part of the Town, I needed to volunteer for something immediately! And here I am 34 years later, still excited about the great folks and good projects of the Conservation Commission. Why have I stayed for so long? The Commission offers the rare opportunity to serve the Town in a very important way while also bringing your own interests and enthusiasms to the table. I’ve learned so much about our amazing local natural resources and helped the Commission take on projects to plan for their preservation and management. Here’s just a sampling of things I’ve been involved with:

-raised money for a partnership project with our school to build an accessible trail to their outdoor classroom;

-gone out with an intrepid crew on the first rainy, warm nights of spring to help salamanders and frogs cross the roads to their breeding grounds in vernal pools;

-helped the Commission partner with landowners to conserve hundreds of acres of beautiful Hartland land and wildlife habitat;

-pulled invasive plants from our roadsides so that native plants can thrive and support our birds and bees;

-talked to fellow Hartlanders at Old Home Day at the Conservation Commission booth;
-taken water samples along Lull's Brook to track its health;

-learned about Class 4 roads and trails to ensure that Hartland has a vibrant trail system for the future;

-learned about how our local and state governments work to support natural resources, and how a group such as the Conservation Commission can help that work;

-enjoyed meeting and working with many fellow Hartlanders on Conservation Commission projects!

One of the many things I love about the Commission is that there is no experience necessary to join – just an interest in being involved and helping your town. As Connie said so many years ago, “This Town runs on volunteers, so if you’re living here, it’s good to do your part.”