

2013 CONSERVATION COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT

2013 was a year of growth for the Conservation Commission. With the addition of new members Jeff Jackson, Lisa Grolljahn, and Christine Tuck, the Commission now has a full slate of seven members. We have no alternates currently enrolled, so there's plenty of room for additional interested individuals. We are a diverse group with many interests and concerns. Each of our members has opportunity to enhance our efforts. Overcoming some growing pains, we are moving ahead on important projects towards the conservation of our town's natural resources.

In December 2013, the Conservation Commission completed the purchase of approximately 7 acres in north Weare at Chipmunk Falls from Laretta Phillips. Laretta had a camp above the falls and thoroughly enjoyed the spot before finding it time to move along. Chipmunk Falls is a unique land form where Dustin Brook rapidly descends a hillside in a series of cascades including a dramatic 25-foot near vertical drop. At high water the falls fill the ravine with a deafening roar. Access is via a cart path from Chipmunk Falls Road off of Craney Hill Road.

The **Shmid/Banks conservation project**, a large important land conservation project at the north end of Melvin Valley, continues to move towards fruition. In August 2013, the Conservation Commission pledged a total of \$180,000 (the bulk of the Conservation Fund balance) in support of this multifaceted project. In addition to the **existing field and forest conservation value** of the project, the town expects to realize the benefit of additional sand and gravel resources on the property and **ultimately additional recreational field development of the reclaimed gravel pit.**

Continuing a very productive association with the Conservation Commission, scouts of Weare Troop 24 BSA undertook additional conservation work in 2013. Noah Payeur updated the Ferrin Pond Trail Map brochure and re-established the associated trail station markers. In completing his Eagle Scout project, Noah provided a tremendous gift to the town. When in stock, the brochures are available in a mailbox placed at the trailhead. Scout Jacob Couture also undertook a significant community service project in clearing trails in the Poor Farm Town Forest of blow down debris.

In keeping with our goal of facilitating access to town conservation lands, in September 2013 the Conservation Commission (contractor D&S Excavating) completed the installation of the Ferrin Pond bridge, a 21-foot open-bottom cast-concrete structure. With the span in place, the Ferrin Pond trailhead may be approached on Class VI Mountain Road without mixing vehicle traffic and Buxton Brook.

A sampling of significant 2013 conservation work by our town forester includes a timber harvest at Felch Farm Town Forest, additional forest management preparations, boundary maintenance work at the Brookshire subdivision open space, and investigation and resolution of a boundary infraction at the Breed Brook Conservation Area (open space associated with the Holly Hills subdivision).

2014 promises to be another year of opportunity for the Conservation Commission. We are grateful for all the support we receive in our conservation mission.

Respectfully submitted,

Andy Fulton (Conservation Commission Chair), for Steve Najjar (Vice Chair), Wendy Stevens (Secretary); and members George Malette, Jeff Jackson, Lisa Grolljahn, Christine Tuck