

Hartland Conservation Commission 2012 Report

Lull's Brook Water Quality Sampling

2012 is the seventh year the Commission has conducted water quality sampling along Hartland's waterways. We currently test four sites for *E. coli* and phosphorus along Lull's Brook as well as Sumner's Falls on the Connecticut River. *E. coli* is a naturally occurring bacteria found in the feces of ruminants as well as humans. Phosphorus is an essential element needed for plant growth. *E. coli* pollution occurs when animal waste is introduced into our water, and most phosphorus contamination results from commercial fertilizers getting washed into waterways during heavy rain events.

Since we began our study in 2005, 8 out of 54 sample events for *E. coli* were above the accepted safe level for swimming and other recreation. Phosphorus has exceeded acceptable levels in 9 of 41 samplings. *E. coli* can contaminate drinking water and cause serious and sometimes fatal illness in humans. Excess phosphorus can lead to exceptionally rapid algae growth which in turn can cause serious illness.

Along with Trout Unlimited we have had discussions with land owners on ways to stabilize stream banks in order to limit erosion and animal access to open water. Individuals can help prevent phosphorus contamination through the judicious use of fertilizers and proper maintenance of septic systems. Since most contamination seems to occur after heavy rain, it is probably wise to limit your contact with surface water for a short period of time after such storm events.

New Community Trail at the 17-Acre Wood

The Commission assisted Micah Heaney and volunteers to create an additional trail loop through the 17-Acre Wood behind the Elementary School in 2012. Presently we are preparing signage for the trail and property boundaries. Some effort was made to reduce poison ivy along the trail to make it safer for all to use.

Education and Outreach

The Commission had booths and a local beef raffle at both Farm Fest and Old Home Day, spreading the word about the new town land at Sumner's Falls, invasive plants, those purple boxes in the trees, and the Conservation Trust Fund. We also helped with Earth Day and Green-Up Day and hosted a well-attended Hartland Community Connections breakfast in September on identifying and controlling invasive plants (partnering with the Ottauquechee Cooperative Invasives Species Management Area). The Commission awarded our first annual Conservation Award at Town Meeting to Micah Heaney for his great work on the 17-Acre Wood trails. Through these efforts we hope to increase awareness of, and encourage public participation in maintaining a healthy natural environment.

Sumner's Falls Management Plan

In conjunction with the Hartland Nature Club, we developed and presented to town officials a series of questions relating to preparing a management plan for the 55-acre parcel at Sumner's Falls. Sumner's Falls is a valuable resource now owned by the Town and offers recreation and nature experiences to those that visit.

We continue our fundraising efforts to build the Hartland Conservation Trust Fund, and welcome any and all contributions. They will be used in our land conservation efforts in Hartland. We also welcome your participation in our monthly meetings, held the second Wednesday of the month at Damon Hall at 7 pm.

