

## HARTLAND CONSERVATION COMMISSION

**Members:** Jennifer Waite (Chair), Dean Greenberg (Clerk), Cordie Merritt (Treasurer), Rob Anderegg, Guy Crosby, Dori Galton, Knox Johnson, and Jared Ulmer

Our activities in 2014 were as varied as the interests of our members! Anyone who would like to attend a meeting or join our Commission is welcome; we gather at 7pm in the Lister's Office (downstairs in Damon Hall) on the second Wednesday of every month. Thanks to outgoing member Bill Stack for all of his help to the Commission!

### **Water Quality Sampling, Temperature Recording and Streamside Buffers**

This is our ninth year of conducting spring and fall water quality sampling; we test for *E. coli* and phosphorous at 4 sites along Lull's Brook and one site on the Connecticut River at Sumner's Falls, as well as monitoring water quality temperature at a village site along Lull's Brook. The high waters this spring contained higher *E. coli* levels, but the fall readings were all within state standards for both *E. coli* and phosphorous. High levels of *E. coli* can cause serious illness in humans and usually result from faulty septic systems or runoff into streams from animal waste. Phosphorous is an essential nutrient to healthy aquatic ecosystems, but high amounts lead to excessive algae growth, impaired water supplies and harmful toxins. Excessive phosphorous is largely the result of runoff from roads, developed areas, lawns and farmlands.

Water temperatures that we measured in Lull's Brook were somewhat higher than what trout like; more trees along the brook would provide more shade and better fish habitat; and besides cooling brook waters, leaves from overhanging trees drop into the water and provide an important source of protein for fish in the brook. Homeowners can help to maintain healthy water quality in our streams and rivers through the judicious use of fertilizers, proper maintenance of septic systems, and keeping a nice buffer of flowers, shrubs and trees (35' or more) between their lawns or pastures and streams. As a reminder, Hartland's bylaws prohibit any fill, excavation or ground disturbance within 35' of a stream, or structures within 50' of the top of the streambank.

### **Commission Outreach Activities**

- The Commission booth at Old Home Day drew considerable attention due in large part to the examples we had of invasive plants. We had suggestions for plants to use instead of invasives, and what to do with those stubborn, established patches of invasive plants.
- We joined many community members for Green-Up Day, and a winter's accumulated trash from town roadsides was collected and sent to the land fill; some cans and bottles were recycled and we hope to support more of that at next year's Green-Up. Commission members helped judge entries to a writing contest held at the Elementary School related to the environment.
- The Commission bestowed our 3rd annual Conservation Award at Town Meeting to Natalie Starr for her many years of dedicated service to this group as well as to the Hartland community.
- We continue our fundraising efforts to build the Hartland Conservation Trust Fund, and welcome any contributions. They are used to help landowners to defray the costs associated with conserving land, and to provide local matching funds for larger land conservation grants.
- Several members were involved in fund raising for the rehabilitation of the LeMax Farm buildings.
- Commission members represented Hartland at the annual Gathering of the Upper Valley Conservation Commissions.

### **Sumner's Falls Town Park Management Plan**

Sumner's Falls Town Park is a wonderful 55-acre parcel on the Connecticut River now owned by the Town that offers many different recreational and nature experiences to those who visit. We are working on a management plan for the park and will be hosting a Hartland Community Connections breakfast on Saturday, April 4<sup>th</sup> for anyone interested in learning more about the park and with ideas for its future uses.

### **Land Conservation Projects**

This year, 3 land conservation projects resulted in 269 additional acres of conserved land in Hartland, including the core of the beautiful Richardson Farm. We are grateful to these generous landowners and to the staff of the Upper Valley Land Trust and Vermont Land Trust for their support of these projects! This

year we also reviewed Hartland's public properties and met with the Upper Valley Land Trust staff to discuss placing conservation easements on two of these properties, as part of being more active stewards for the Town.

### **Revetement Project to Stabilize a Streambank on Lull's Brook**

We teamed up with Trout Unlimited and a local landowner to carry out a "revetement" project to stabilize a severely eroding section of streambank along Lull's Brook. This natural alternative to stone rip-rap involved using tree branches, a tree trunk/root ball, and willow stakes to slow erosion and provide great fish habitat (spotting a big Brook Trout during the project was a nice extra).

### **Invasive Plant & Insect Control**

We were actively involved in attempts to control honeysuckle, knotweed, black swallow-wort and several other invasive plants. Suggestions were made to the Town road crew as to ways to reduce the spread of garlic mustard and wild parsnip when road sides are mowed. Two of our members attended the area's "Garlic Mustard Muster". Plans were also discussed as to how the town should respond when insects such as emerald ash borer and asian longhorn beetle infest our forests.

### **Travis' Trail is Re-Engineered**

The Commission worked with Eagle Scout candidate Tim Alibozek on a re-route of Travis' Trail along Lull's Brook behind the Rec Center, which had taken quite a hit (and in some areas was completely obliterated) during Tropical Storm Irene. The scouts did a huge amount of work, including the re-route, some Japanese Knotweed thrashing, and cutting back the energetic brush along remaining sections of the trail.

**Conservation tip:** if you want to help Bobolinks during nesting season, mow your fields by May 30, then delay a second mowing until after August 15



**Hartland Conservation Commission and Trout Unlimited teamed up with a local landowner to stabilize an eroding bank along Lull's Brook and create better fish habitat.**