

# 2008 Annual Report

## Berlin Conservation Commission

The Conservation Commission meets the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays of every month at 7:30PM in the Berlin Town Offices. Commission members are Steve Beard, Skip Duggan, Jerry Freed, Louise Janda, Karen Scheffer, Lee Tabor and Walter Bickford. The public is encouraged to attend any meeting, can join as an Associate member, and bring any conservation or wetlands-related questions to the Conservation Commission at any time. We can help ensure that your activities are in accordance with State of Massachusetts wetlands regulations and save you time and expense if you contact the Conservation Commission before any activities within 100 feet of wetlands and intermittent streams or within 200 feet of perennial streams (flows most of the year). Contact a commission member, attend any regularly scheduled meeting, or email us at [berlincc@townofberlin.com](mailto:berlincc@townofberlin.com).

The year 2008 was busy with significant building and remodeling in town including a substantial 40B project, active open space acquisitions, and addressing the continued destruction of open space and conservation lands by unauthorized use of motorized vehicles.

### Land Conservation/Open Space

- Andrew Curtis made a gift of approximately 8.5 acres of land south of Sawyer Hill and west of Gates Pond. This protects for Berlin a valuable piece of wetland and animal habitat containing a cranberry bog and the perennial stream that flows southwest from Gates Pond. It abuts other conservation lands.
- Kendall Homes completed the Conservation Restriction (CR) on approximately 4 acres of wooded upland south and east of the 5 house development on the common drive off Pleasant St just south of Highway 62.
- The Barry O'Brien estate made a gift of approximately 10 acres of land in Hog Swamp. The land is between I-495 and Sawyer Hill Rd and north of Highway 62 and will remain as open space. It is primarily wetland and excellent wildlife habitat.
- A CR was completed on approximately 27 acres at rear of Sawyer Hill LLC property and adjoining other state and Berlin conservation lands to remain as open space.
- The commission purchased from a private party approximately 5 acres of critical habitat adjoining North Brook along Crosby Road to protect the North Brook corridor.
- The commission worked with a State of Massachusetts wildlife biologist to improve wildlife habitat by selective clearing of non-wetland areas in the 13 acre conservation land at the corner of Pleasant St and Route 62. Bluebird boxes were also installed in the meadow periphery. Wild turkey, coyote and deer are frequently seen there.
- The commission acquired for the town a 'right of way' along another parcel on the old Guilford rail bed.
- A parking area has been opened off Linden St to access the Mt Pisgah conservation land and associated trails purchased (aka Devine property) purchased in late 2006 (thank you to Dennis Bartlett and the Berlin Highway Department).

- The Conservation Commission is constantly pursuing opportunities to protect critical wetlands and wildlife habitat in Berlin. Some of these opportunities take years to mature. Such acquisitions are purchased with funds from the “Berlin Open Space Fund” and/or government grants (no Berlin taxpayer funds required!).

### Wetland Policy

The commission researched ‘best practices’ from Conservation Commissions in other communities, and as a result in April, 2008 established a ‘Berlin Wetland Policy’ protecting the immediate 25 feet adjacent to flagged/determined wetlands. This policy protects the most critical and beneficial areas adjacent to wetlands to help ensure clean drinking water and clean wells. The policy has subsequently been successfully applied to every Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA), Abbreviated Notice of Resource area Delineation (ANRAD) and Notice of Intent (NOI) brought before the commission in 2008.

### Miscellaneous Activities

- Engaged wetland experts where appropriate to jointly analyze ANRADs & NOIs and issue associated Orders of Conditions (OOCs) for large or complex construction projects.
- Attendance at the annual Massachusetts of Conservation Commission (MACC) seminars addressing wetland regulations, new state guidelines and open space/conservation techniques.
- Sponsored or participated in summer outdoors programs for school age children to raise environmental awareness and good stewardship of wildlife, animals and the environment. The group highlight was a narrated visit to Forty Caves (thank you to the Library personnel for their assistance).
- The annual Earth Day Cleanup in April had 44 volunteers along with the commission who cleaned up along town roadways resulting in disposal of over 91 large bags of refuse plus a dump truck of tires, gas grills, pallets, mattresses, furniture, rugs, paint and other litter (thank you to Matthew Trucking for the use of the dump truck and to Lowe’s Store for kid’s ice cream coupons). Please do not litter the roadways in our beautiful town and volunteer to help on Earth Day!
- Continuous cleanup activity for open space areas from extensive and repetitive littering, bonfires and motorized vehicle destruction.
- Established a Wetland Protection Fund in accordance with Massachusetts State law for use, with Selectmen’s approval, to protect Berlin wetlands. Funding is from the town portion of fees associated with NOIs submitted to the Conservation Commission.

### Enforcement Activity

- Met with the Berlin Police, the Selectmen and Massachusetts Parks Police on plans to address destruction of Berlin conservation lands by 4-wheelers and dirt bikes, intentional fires, cutting of trees and littering/dumping (thank you to the Berlin Police Department for enforcement successes to date). Motorized vehicle damage to the Ross project land alone is estimated at over \$40,000 and growing. Please alert the

Berlin Police department if you witness unauthorized motorized vehicles (4-wheelers and dirt bikes) on town open space properties.

- There were two active enforcement orders for filling in of wetland areas in violation of the Massachusetts Wetlands Law. The wetland restorations are awaiting final inspection in spring/early summer of 2009.

New for 2009

- New trail maps for selected conservation areas
- Signage for Berlin's conservation lands to encourage authorized usage (hiking, cross country skiing, bird watching, dog walking, snowshoeing), and to deter unauthorized uses and destruction of lands (motorized vehicles, cutting of trees, fires dumping and littering, overnight parking of autos). The Berlin Police number is on the signs, and they will provide police enforcement and towing warnings as necessary.
- Increased outreach to townspeople and other organizations for assistance with Earth Day cleanup, trail improvements, and open space preservation

Respectfully submitted,

Skip Duggan -- Chairman, Berlin Conservation Commission